TOM CLINGSTONE'S LETTERS

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"Aunt Sarah paid seventy cents for the three."

(See page 43.)

Tom Clingstone's Letters To the Editor

BY

BENJ. F. COBB,

Illustrated by

ELLA BRISON.

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TOM CLINGSTONE'S LETTERS.

LETTER NUMBER ONE.

Hardacre Corners, Illinois.

I received your letter asking when I was coming to Chicago, and you will no doubt be surprised when I tell you that I have already made my trip to your city and returned without calling on you. Perhaps this needs some explanation, but whether it does or not I am mighty glad to get back to the Corners and find that I am all here. I would not have the board of strategy down at the store know what I went through for the best suit of clothes on Clark street. You see it was this way: I decided to give you a little surprise party, and therefore concluded not to let you know of my anticipated visit. Having never been to Chicago before, pointers were necessary, and listening to James Henry Burdette's talk had posted me quite well. James Henry used to live in Chicago and knows a lot about it. No one but my own people

knew of my trip, for which many prayers of thanks have been breathed since by yours truly.

Arriving in Chicago in the evening, a great mistake of mine, by the way, I walked out of the Union depot with the crowd, thinking that as soon as the passengers scattered a little I could get to see where the best road to travel was, but, bless you, they did not seem to scatter, and the further we went the more mixed the crowd seemed to get. Looking up one street a big bridge loomed up and looked uninviting, so, turning in the opposite direction and walking awhile, I decided to inquire for some place where lodging could be had. The fellow questioned showed me a place which he said was first-class, and introduced me to the man in charge. The fellow in charge was not one of the kind of a man who would be taken for a Sunday school teacher, but perhaps he was all right in that place. He was a kind of flashily dressed fellow, with his plaid trousers and velvet vest, but he did not wear any coat about the house and wore his sleeves rolled back sort of careless like. But my, he was smart. A drunken fellow came in and commenced to make a row, and Mike, that was his name, just collared him and threw him out head first. Some one told me on the quiet that Mike was the bouncer for the house, but what he meant by that was more than I knew.

After the affair with the drunk Mike and I got to be good friends, and when I asked him where I was to sleep he told me to wait until he got off from watch at ten o'clock and we would go out and see Chicago by the electric bulb. Secretly I was pleased. I did not understand half he said, and how to connect Chicago and the electric bulb was too deep for me, but I felt honored that a man who had lived in Chicago for years and who could call all the aldermen by their front names should take pains to show me around. A little after ten o'clock we started. We went over the bridge on one of those electric cars, and after walking a couple of blocks we came to where Mike said a friend of his, Jack Somebody, ran an opera. Mike had left his money at home, and as he did not see his friend Jack around anywhere, he told me to pay for the tickets, which I did, and we went in.

The opera is a funny thing, it seems to me, and there were lots more men than ladies at the show, and I have come to the opinion that Deacon Pilgrim is about right when he says it is no fit place for people who care to be good. Some of these opera girls did not talk real nice. Mike wanted me to go behind the scenes and be introduced to a friend of his who did some of the high kicking, but I put my foot down against going into such company. When we left the opera house the boy from the Corners was ready to

go to bed, but Mike said he wanted to walk around a little first, so we went out and walked. We had not been out long before we met some lady friends of Mike's, and they wanted us to go into some place where they were acquainted and get some beer. They were right jolly girls, and we had a fine time telling conundrums and stories, etc. They asked me all about the Corners, and were wonderfully pleased when I invited them out to see us. I don't think I ever fell in with nicer people, and the strange thing about it all was they would not let me pay a cent. Mike had borrowed some money of a friend of his who he said was a "fly cop," and the young ladies seemed to have plenty of money also. As we were right in the height of fun a brother of one of the young ladies came in and made her go home, and of course the other one had to go, too. I did not like the looks of the brother, but he was her brother all right, for she got right up and left as soon as he said so.

It must have been about two o'clock in the morning when we parted with the young ladies, and Mike was ready to go home. I was sharp enough not to drink much beer, and was all right when we reached the hotel. There was another man in charge then, and he asked me to pay for my bed, which I had not done before. I reached for my purse, but it was

gone; then I put my hand on my watch pocket, and my watch was gone. To make a long story short, I was cleaned out as clean from valuables as though I had been through old Jim Barlow's threshing machine. Well, perhaps I was not wild. I hollered "Police" and "Murder," and just then somebody gave me a blow under the ear, and when I came to, Mike was sponging me off with cold water. I wanted to report my loss to the police at once, but Mike told me not to. He said I was robbed when I was on the car coming home, and that I would only be laughed at if I reported it at the police station. I did not go to bed at all, for it was nearly morning when I came to myself, and I had no money for a bed. Say, but that fellow Mike is all right. He paid for my breakfast in the morning and bought me a ticket for the Corners, and told me not to mind repaying him. He felt awful bad for me, Mike did.



Dad.

LETTER NUMBER TWO.

Hardacre Corners, Illinois.

Every day I have had it in my mind to write to you, for I had so much to say that I did not want to forget to tell you. Dad says he is my regulator, and so far he has held me back.

The fact is, Mr. Editor, I am in love. There, I have said it, and I mean it. It is just a case of love at first sight, and Dad says I have not been so used up before since I had the scarlet fever when I was just a kid.

I will tell you about her. She is the dearest, sweetest little bundle of sweetness that ever you heard of. Say, I never knew there were such nice girls. Dad says that I may outlive this, but that I have a bad case. I guess he is making fun of me, but he will find out that I am in dead earnest.

This girl of mine is a peach! I have got to tell someone about her, and I might as well write it to you. You see it was this way. Dad and I were out to the exposition at Omaha, and when we came home we found ourselves on the same car with one of our competitors who has a lumber yard in the next town, Mr. Schmidt by name, and it was his daughter Louisa

that will be from this out my guiding star. I never felt ungrateful to Dad in my life, but I was a little put out when I realized that Mr. Schmidt and Dad were not on speaking terms, but what does love care for a little thing like that. Ma asked me what the girl had on, but bless you, I could not have told to save me. I do know she was tall and graceful, with color in her cheeks, and her sweet face well set off by her hazel eyes, and a mouth that for beauty could not be surpassed. All these things are indelibly impressed on my mind. Her mouth, well, perhaps I will tell you more of its sweetness later on.

Dad tried to laugh at me at first, but he soon found out that it was no laughing matter with me. Do you know I could not keep my eyes off that girl, and I told Dad all about my plans, for every time I looked at her the plans would make themselves. As soon as we are married and get back from our wedding trip, and I think I will go to Omaha for that trip, I will have an understanding between my father-in-law and Dad, so there will be no more cutting prices at the lumber yards. I feel that I ought to do this for them as long as I am to have so much happiness myself. You see, she is an only daughter and I am an only son, so it stands to reason that we will both fall heir to lumber yards some day, and when we do I shall hire a man to run the Schmidt yard until one of our

boys gets big enough to walk in the footsteps of his father.

Say, but she is a sweet one. We did not get to Hardacre until about nine o'clock that morning, and as Louisa and her father got out at the station before we reached ours I heard her say to her father, in her sweet, musical voice: "I wonder who that jay is that has been ogling me all the morning?" I looked around to see whom she meant, and it was lucky for the jay that I didn't see him. Say, I would fight for that girl. I was telling Dad this morning that it was a little over a month since I first met my future wife. "Yes," he says, "and you have got her married and have raised children big enough to go into the lumber business, in your mind. Have you waked up to the fact that you never have even spoken to the girl yet, and that her affections are most likely somewhere else? You don't take after your Dad, I can tell you that." And with this he left me and went out into the yard to sell a man some shingles. Thinking about what Dad said just made the perspiration stand out all over me. Say, were you ever in love? If you were, how did you manage to let the girl know about it?

LETTER NUMBER THREE.

Hardacre Corners, Illinois.

I begin to think that the hours I spend in writing to you are the only ones in my life that there is any pleasure in, for I feel that in you I have a warm and sympathetic friend that I can open my heart to, and that by you I am understood. I also feel that through the columns of your paper I can reach thousands of my fellow men, some of whom will give me a kind thought in my troubles, and others will learn by my reverses how to do better by themselves. Of course, occasionally a careless person will read my letters to you, and perhaps laugh at what he will call my folly, but in years to come, when trials come to him, he will remember my words, and will be forced to breathe that sympathetic sentence: "Poor Tom Clingstone."

You have no doubt come to the conclusion by this time that my spirits are not so buoyant as they were when I wrote you last, and you have judged rightly, for since writing my last I have passed through a fearful ordeal. I might as well tell you the whole story and commence where I left off in my last letter,

and that if I remember right was where father took me to task for being such a weak-hearted lover. I sort of looked upon Louisa Schmidt as mine by right, but by what right I could not have told you unless by right of discovery, as a rival in the case had never entered my head.

After thinking for awhile over what Dad said to me, I determined to go and declare myself at once, and as soon as I had decided to do this, I pictured the thing done, and I laughed as I thought how surprised Dad would look when some day in the near future I brought Louisa over to Hardacre and said: "Dad, behold your daughter that is to be!" The thought was so comforting and pleasing that I sat dreaming about it until it was too late to go over to Norton that day. Norton is where Schmidt's lumber yard is located, and where Louisa lives.

The next day, about two o'clock in the afternoon, I hitched up Dad's old sorrel mare, and drove eight miles over to Norton. I think this was the pleasantest ride I ever took. I felt that I was going to see the girl I loved, and that in some way I would find her in some picturesque attitude, and that she would be waiting for me. In imagination I went through the first meeting, my self-introduction, her quick perception of my love and all. I could even feel the touch of her lips, hear the sweet tone of her musical voice,

and as I took her hand hear her say: "We were intended for each other."

I day-dreamed for two hours, while the sorrel mare took her time on the journey to Norton, and when the spire of the little Baptist church at Norton came before my vision I waked up to the fact that I had work to do. I drove past Mr. Schmidt's lumber yard and up to the livery stable, and feeling the importance of my mission, ordered my horse put up and fed. I got the stable boy to brush me off, and after wiping my shoes off with an extra handkerchief that I had brought along for the purpose, I started over towards Schmidt's lumber yard and the house where dwelt the object of my visit and my affection.

At last I had reached the house, and, standing before it on the opposite side of the street, what an unutterable fountain of love welled up in my breast. I was before the very house where lived the woman of all others to me, my Louisa. As I walked across the street I pictured myself as I knew I must look, and wondered if my tie was on straight, and I also wondered what I ought to do with my hands, and then I wondered what I would do with my feet when I stopped walking. Say, but there is something funny about being in love, isn't there?

Just at this time I espied something wallowing in the front yard, and it struck me that the pigs had

gotten in among Louisa's flower beds, and that I could do her a service, and at the same time make a point for an introduction. They were not pigs, however, but a couple of children who appeared to be about three years old, and the dirtiest little red-headed imps of Satan I ever saw. They were digging in the soft dirt of a flower bed, and as I stepped up to the fence to get a better view of them they commenced to fight over the possession of a small shovel.

They seemed to be about the same size, and for a moment I enjoyed the fight. They were both so ugly that I took no sides, and did not care a rap which whipped. As they warmed up to the fray, they commenced to scream, and there was no discounting those lungs; they were all right. Those screams penetrated every house in the village; people in the houses opposite opened the doors and threw up their windows, and all thoughts of Louisa were for the moment driven from my head, but I was brought back to a realizing sense of my mission, for the door of the Schmidt residence opened and the object of my affection stood before me. But, oh how different from what I had pictured. She was not dressed any too neatly, and the little red-headed, six-months' old child she had in her arms did not improve her appearance in my mind.

Louisa spoke to me, but I must say the tone or

words were not to my liking. It seems she imagined that I was the cause of the screams that came from the red-headed couplet, and my blood almost froze in my veins as she cried out, in a voice anything but musical: "What do you mean, you ugly-looking brute, by scaring my children in that way," and then as she discovered that the kids were not scared, but fighting, she stamped her foot and yelled: "Henry George, stop fighting; Grover Cleveland, let your brother alone, and both of you come into the house this minute!"

Surprises were coming so fast that I could hardly get my breath, and to cap it all another shock of red hair appeared on the scene, and under it was the freckled face of the big, awkward, double-fisted German that I remembered as having had pointed out to me three years before as Schmidt's yardman or teamster. The whole truth had dawned upon me, and as I walked, or, rather staggered away, I heard him say, in his broken English: "Vot's de matter, my tear, did dot drunken chap vant to steal some ov our papies?"

Mother says that "man proposes and God disposes," and that I should be resigned, but how can a fellow resign when he never got any nearer election than I did?

LETTER NUMBER FOUR.

Hardacre Corners, Illinois.

Dad says that I am the greatest chap for "chasing butterflies" that there is in these parts, and then he commences to tell me of the different things I have been carried away with, and he makes me feel so bad that I just go off by myself and try to forget that he is unjust to me.

You see Dad is so practical that he cannot understand me. Ma says I take more after her people, who were literary and artists to a great extent. Ma says she had a granduncle once who was a great elocutionist and could recite the whole of "The Boy Stood on the Burning Deck," when he was only four years old. I think it great to have such ancestry, and told Dad so. He laughed and then asked Ma if that granduncle's name was not Lord Nelson Washington Brown, and Ma said "of course it was, father, you know it as well as I do." When Ma wants to impress Dad with her superiority she always calls him father. Ma was looking pretty severe, but Dad put on that 2 x 12 smile of his and said he had never seen Lord Nelson Washington Brown mentioned in history.

Then Ma colored up and went out of the room. Dad is an awful hector, and he doesn't seem to care who he hectors, either.

I suppose you would like to know how I got over the shock I received at Norton last month when I found that Louisa was married to the big Dutchman. To tell the truth I hardly know how I got home, the shock was so great. It was long after dark when I arrived at the Corners, and the folks had all gone to bed. I put the old sorrel mare in the stable, and then, not feeling that I should allow myself the comforts of a bed after making such a "jack" of myself, I crawled up in the loft and slept in the hay. The next morning I went in to breakfast after Dad had gone to the lumber yard and I told Ma all about it. She did not laugh at me, but tried to make me feel that all was for the best and that I would live to see the day that I would bless the Dutchman for getting ahead of me. I cannot feel as Ma does, however, and I am sure now that I shall never marry.

For a few days, when I thought of Louisa my courage would seem to go clear down into my boots and I would feel that there was nothing to live for, but I have gotten over it now. I am firm in my convictions that I shall never marry, but I find there is still something to live for. Dad has not said a word to me about my little scrape at Norton. I am sure

Ma has bought him off, and I have gotten so now that I can look him square in the face. But I was going to tell you what it was that made me feel that there was still some reason why I should cling to life and see in it some pleasure for the future.

I have decided to get rich. Does the idea startle you? Well, it startled Dad, but so firm has the desire for riches taken hold of me that I can talk to him about riches just as well as I could talk to a customer about buying a load of fencing. Besides, I had to tell Dad because I had to explain to him why I should not be able to keep his books after I was well on the road to wealth. Dad put on one of those droll smiles of his as soon as I told him, and the smile took such a firm hold of his face that I don't believe he got rid of it until he shaved the next morning.

I may conclude to continue to write to you, however, not so much for the money you promised to pay me when I become perfect in the profession, as that I desire to give you and the readers of your paper the benefit of my plans for success. I will tell you how it all happened and start you in from the commencement of my inspiration. I was feeling more disgusted with life than usual one evening, out of sorts with all mankind and dead sore on all womankind, when I decided to walk down to Joe Mason's

store and see what had become of the old board of strategy that was there during the war.

It was a cold night and I was surprised to find so many present, but the mail had been a little late and there was a stranger there who was a very interesting talker. He was a nephew of old Joel Schoolcraft's and was from Boston. Joel was as proud of him as though he had been the president of the United States, and would nod his approval of all his nephew said. The stranger's name was Mark Schoolcraft, and he was the son of an older brother of Joel's and must have been all of fifty years of age. I guess he is quite a big man down in Boston, for he had lived there all his life and knew all about the Cradle of Liberty and Bunker Hill monument, the Charlestown navy yard and the Harvard football team, and lots of other things.

I shall never forget when the inspiration came, though. In was when Steve Porter said he would like to send his son down there to make some money. "Send your son down there!" said Mr. Schoolcraft. "If you know what is good for your son you want to keep him right here. The great trouble with you fellows is that you don't know when you have got a good thing. You talk about sending a boy to Boston, who doesn't know a thing on earth, when there are gold and silver dollars hanging right on the trees

here and you haven't got sense enough to pick them."

Old Joel Schoolcraft chuckled and nudged Charlie Kane, who sat by the side of him, but old Steve just looked ashamed and seemed to feel sorry he had said anything. Henry Burdette, who has more courage than most men in such cases, said: "What do you mean, my friend, about those gold and silver dollars? We may be blind, but we are willing to have our eyes opened."

Mr. Schoolcraft straightened out his legs, lit another of Joe Mason's best five-cent cigars and said: "I doubt if you people can grasp all that I am to say, for possibly none of you have looked these matters up. You people have one of the finest locations in the world for a certain line of business, and if your shells aren't thicker than a cider barrel I can prove it to you right now.

"You have the ground and you have the air; now all you want is a few incubators and a few hundred eggs and the foundation of your fortune is made. Did you know there were hundreds of carloads of chickens shipped to California each year? Did you know that the poultry men of all the great eastern cities have trouble to fill their orders? If you do, then you can realize how sure I am that you have the gold and silver dollars just for the picking."

I wanted to get right out of the store and run

home then and commence to get that foundation ready, but I thought I had better wait and perhaps I would get some more information on the subject. I found out that he had never had time to try this scheme himself as he was working for the government and could not leave because they could get no one to fill his place; he had hard work to get off to visit his Uncle Joel, but I am glad he came. The idea that I should ever have thought any girl on earth was necessary to my happiness.

When I went home and crept into bed that night I was full of solid joy. I did not go to sleep for two whole hours, and when I did I dreamed of dollars growing on trees, of barred Plymouth Rocks, White Leghorns, incubators hatching silver dollars, and lots of other good things which I cannot remember. I was up so early that I surprised the folks the next morning, and I related all I had heard at the store and also what I had decided to do. Ma looked pleased and said, half to herself: "How like Uncle William," and Dad said: "That's the uncle that borrowed the money of you, isn't it?" Ma didn't say a word, so I don't know what the whole thing meant. I have sent to Chicago for a poultry journal and am going to get right to work. You shall hear how I get along, for riches will never lift me above my friends.

LETTER NUMBER FIVE.

Hardacre Corners, Illinois.

In my last letter I told you about sending for those poultry journals, and about my deciding to get rich by raising chickens. I am overjoyed to say that I know I am on the right track now, and that my future is so bright. The papers came all right; there were three of them, and it seems to me that there is information enough in them to make a man independently rich in a short time if he sticks as close to the prescribed lines as I shall.

Dad says he thinks I ought to go somewhere and learn the hen business, but I don't think he means it, for he cannot think me so stupid that I cannot run a poultry business without serving an apprenticeship. Why, old Aunt Sarah Lane has been keeping hens for the last fifty years, and she never went to school a day in her life, and the old lady sells eggs and makes money. Dad says old Sarah might give me a few pointers. I wonder what he takes me for, anyway. Of course, the old lady could not teach me anything, but you bet I will be ready to teach her in a few days, without a doubt.

I can talk to Ma about this business, and she understands me, but Dad doesn't seem to catch on at all. Dad looked the poultry papers over and just grinned. I was asking Ma a few questions as to what she thought the different expressions in the poultry journals meant, and when I said I wondered what they meant when they talked about building up a strain, Dad said he thought the strain came in when the hens tried to live up to the editor's stories, and then he laughed, but Ma and I did not laugh a bit.

This hen business is really beyond my calculation, when it comes to earning money; I am surprised at what can be done. I thought all the chance one had was to sell eggs at the market price, and the same with chickens, but I find by reading over these papers that I can go into the breeding of fancy chickens, and that it is just as easy to get three dollars a dozen for eggs as it is to get twenty cents. All I have to have is the right kind of eggs to start with. Of course, those eggs cost more to begin with, but I have a little money of my own.

There was one thing I was puzzled over, and that was as to the best method of building henhouses. It seems to me as though all the chicken-raisers have different ideas, but as they all must have some good points, and as I could get the lumber from Dad, I built one of each kind, as far as my money went, re-

serving a few dollars for those fancy eggs. The back yard, where I have started the business, is not so very handsome, and Dad kicks a little and calls it unsightly, but he will change his tune when I start my bank account.

My incubator and brooders came last night, and I have sent six dollars to a firm down East for two settings of eggs. Ma said she did not think I ought to send so far, but I liked the tone of his ad. I sent for what he called his Barred Plymouth Rocks, but I have been thinking since that perhaps I have made a mistake, as I was calculating to raise chickens for the shows, and if these are barred they won't let me enter them, but perhaps barred doesn't mean the same with chickens as it does with horses.

I am going to keep a regular set of books, and when I have paid Dad for his lumber, and Ma for the rent of the back yard, I will bet they will both give me credit for some smartness. I wish you would suggest some name for my poultry farm, something that will look well in print, for I intend to advertise in the poultry journals as soon as I get some of those fancy chicks ready. Dad says I had better call it the Clingstone Folly, and that he has charged the lumber I took to profit and loss already, but that is all talk, for I keep the books myself yet, and I know the lumber is charged to Thomas Clingstone, Esquire,

and I know that I have a page in the ledger the same as any other customer, and I am proud of it.

I almost forgot to tell you that I could not wait for the chickens to hatch before I owned some live stock, so I sent to another place and bought a trio of fowl. These are prize birds of the Barred Plymouth variety, and I expect them to arrive some time next week. I have studied their pictures in the paper so much that I am sure I would know them if I met them in the street.

Things are coming my way at last, and when I commence to get in the money for my eggs and chickens you can just bet that Louisa Schmidt, that was, will be sorry that she ever met a Dutchman before she did me, or she would if she ever happened to find out about me. I was looking over my books this morning, and it makes me feel like a business man, although I must own the ledger account is awfully one-sided, but that will all change in a short time, and when it does I will let you know how much I got into debt before I began to pull out. I have read that many business men have first gotten badly in debt and then made a great success, and I guess I am following in their footsteps. I am sure I am, as far as the debts go.

Do you know it makes me feel a foot taller to be in business for myself. One of the traveling salesmen

we buy of came into the office the other morning and sprung some of his funny stuff on me, but I never smiled. He asked me if I had taken a drink out of mother's starch bowl, thinking it was buttermilk, or if I had swallowed a yellow pine 2 x 4 or anything. I suppose he thought that was funny, but I guess I took him down a peg or two when I told him I was in business for myself now, and that I had on my mind something more serious than stale jokes, or new ones either, for that matter.

I have found there is nothing like impressing your importance on to people. I can do this quite well with the traveling salesmen, for they all want to stand in, but I do have lots of trouble with the townspeople. You see, I was born right here, and I am just Tom to everyone. I have been called Mr. Clingstone several times by strangers, and I can tell you it is what should be, and when I have succeeded in my business, and have gained my standing among the merchants of the country you can just bet that these people will call me Mr. Clingstone, or I will not answer them.

I don't want you to think by what I have written that I feel above the traveling salesmen, for I do not. They are right nice fellows, and when my mind is not so taken up with my own business I am sure I enjoy their jolly ways, but I appreciate the fact that

they have no business interests to look after, and besides that, they don't know what care is. They have all their expenses paid when they are away from home, and one of them told me he had not been home for ten years. Just think of it. No care, and stop at the best hotels in the country. It would never suit me, though, for my active mind needs care. Dad says I will get enough when the pin-feathers begin to sprout, but I am not losing any sleep about pin-feathers, or any other kind, for I have subscribed for three poultry journals, and they, with my good business ability, will carry me through with flying colors.

There, I have returned to my own business again, which I did not intend to do, but it shows how bound up I am in it, and how it is uppermost in my mind, and I have been told that was the sign of good business ability. I was writing about the lack of care the traveling salesmen have, and I wanted to add another point that I remembered. The house even pays for their laundry, just think of it, and for their baths. One of them told me he took a bath every time he got to a hotel that had one, as his firm required it of him. That would never do for me. Not that I would not need the bath occasionally, but to work for a man who told me when or where to bathe, or what kind

of a shirt I should wear, would be more than I could stand.

As soon as my three-dollar eggs come I will set my incubators, and hope by the time I write you again I shall write to the music of hundreds of little chicks whose song will mean "Money for Tom! Money for Tom," for I shall be Tom for awhile, though I trust sometime I shall, even in the eyes of the people of the Corners, rise to the dignity of Mr. Thomas Clingstone.

LETTER NUMBER SIX.

Hardacre Corners, Illinois.

Three months ago to-day I wrote you of my determination to get rich and I also told you how I was to do it. Of course you remember it was to come by the way of eggs and chickens. Two months ago I told you more of my story and I also told you that when I wrote again I hoped to do so to the music of a hundred little chicks.

Of course you are interested to know how I came along in my business, and to tell you the truth I am a good bit interested in that myself. I am going to be straightforward and honest with you, for you have told me that was the best way and I believe it. Besides I need your advice in certain matters that have come up in this new line of business of mine. I have sent in some questions to the poultry journals, but as yet they have not answered me. To tell the whole truth I have had a few setbacks in a mild way, but I am not at all discouraged, although I have come to the conclusion that my henhouses are not just the thing, and Dad persists in making remarks that have a tendency to hurt my feelings.

Do you know I think I could write a good article on how a father ought to treat his son? I don't want you to think that I have any fault to find with Dad, for I have not, and Ma says that he is a good provider and kind, as husbands go. But I feel sure he should have a better appreciation of a son who has business ability, and I don't care if he reads this right in print. I told him the other day when he was talking about age and experience being necessary for great achievements and was pointing out Dewey as an example, that he must not forget Hobson. Say! but you ought to have seen Dad smile as he said: "Yes, but he slopped over and sunk his great deed in kisses as many fathoms deep as he did the Merrimac in water." You know Dad was a sailor once and he is at home when talking about ships and the ocean. But Hobson is all right just the same, and a fellow would be a chump if he let all those sweet kisses get by him. Yum! Yum!! you bet I wouldn't.

I am wandering in my remarks and must get back to business. If you remember, I told you what a handsome trio of fowls I had sent for. I send you the picture that I cut out of the poultry paper and also send you a photograph of the trio as they appeared on arrival. I sent a copy of both of these pictures to the editor of the Poultry Journal and asked him if I had any redress. That is to say, after

I had sent my fifteen dollars for these three fine-looking birds as shown in the picture and then received the three dreadful-looking things that I did receive, if I could make the man pay me damages or pay back my money. I thought and think now that my letter was plain and businesslike, but do you know he never answered it at all.

I showed a copy of the letter to Dad this morning just to make sure it was all right, and I could have cried with vexation for doing it a moment after. Dad may be a good business man, and I know he pays cash for everything (and isn't obliged to, either), but he makes some very unbusinesslike remarks. He read the letter over and then said: "You want redress, do you? I should think it would be those two woe-begone looking hens and that scarecrow of a rooster that needed redressing." I told him that redress meant damages and then he told me he thought I had been damaged enough already.

I can stand a joke from Dad once in awhile, but when he says such things as these in dead earnest I cannot help but feel hurt, and I wonder how he has ever succeeded in business with so little education, don't you? My only solace in my hours of trouble is Ma, and she is a world of comfort. She told me not to mind Dad; that all business men had their trials and that if I would let the new fowls

alone they would most likely redress themselves. I looked up quick to see if she had turned against me, too, but I have been ashamed of the thought ever since, for Ma is as good as gold. I don't know what she means by the fowls redressing themselves, but Ma has helped me before and I am bound to trust her again.

The wrong side of the ledger is still increasing in figures, and I may have made a few mistakes, but I feel assured that the new venture will turn out all right. The eggs I sent for down East came at last, but they were a long time coming. Dad said they must be coming by slow freight, but the man wrote me that he had so many orders ahead of mine that he could not send them as promptly as he would like to. This did not hurt my feelings any, for if he has so many orders ahead it only goes to prove that Mr. Schoolcraft, of Boston, was right when he said there was a fortune in the business for the man who would take hold of it.

Just think of selling eggs at three dollars a dozen. Money in it? Well! I should say there was, and then to be obliged to write to your customers that they must wait their turn! I don't eat an egg now but I see in it the foundation of a fortune. I said that at the table one morning, and Dad smiled. Oh, that smile, it is simply awful. Dad doesn't say a word, he

just smiles. He has several smiles, Dad has, but he doesn't seem to have but one that he uses in regard to the hen business, and since that morning he doesn't say eggs any more; he calls them foundations. He likes hard boiled eggs, and thinking he would forget to call them foundations if cooked some other way, I induced Ma to serve them dropped on toast, the same as I had seen it done at the hotels, but it didn't work. When he sat down to breakfast and saw a big slice of toast with two eggs resting on it, he looked up to me, and said: "Say, Tom, your Ma's struck a new lead. She is starting her foundations on mud sills now."

Do you wonder that I get discouraged sometimes? After all, I have had a little pleasure out of the business, as well as having enjoyed the prospects of future success. When my fancy eggs came I bought enough to fill one incubator, and set the thing at work at once. For three weeks the last thing at night, and the first thing in the morning I was at that incubator, and I counted the hours that must pass before I should see any of the fruits of my labor. One morning, just two weeks ago now, I was rewarded by hearing the first peep of a chicken. That day I didn't do any bookkeeping, but I watched the little chickens as, one by one, they pecked themselves out of their prisons from darkness into light. That was a happy

day on the whole, although, like most others, it had its drawbacks.

For instance, I had a hundred eggs in that incubator, and only fifty-seven of them produced chickens. I was so pleased over the fifty-seven that I hardly thought about the other forty-three eggs that showed no signs of animation, or at least I gave it but little thought at first, but Dad never lets anything escape him. The next morning he said that he heard that I was forty-three birds shy. Just think that my Dad, a business man and deacon of the church, should talk slang like that. I told him that there were forty-three eggs that did not materialize. "Well," said he, "that means that nineteen of the foundation stones that you got at the store were no better than the ones that you had sent from down East, doesn't it?" I did not say a word, for it never occurred to me that I had no way of telling whether or not my prize eggs had hatched. Of course, I should have marked the eggs, but I didn't. If I had thought about it at all, I should have thought that there would be no trouble in telling the chick from three-dollar or twenty-cent eggs, but I have learned something, however.

Since the first day when I became the owner of live chicks I have had nine funerals, but am still in possession of forty-eight chicks that need constant care,

and have more colors than I ever knew grew on feathers. Barred Plymouth Rocks were the kind I decided on, but with my forty-three eggs that did not hatch, and the nine deaths, I am at a loss to know whether I am spending my time and talents on high-priced birds, or the ordinary barn-yard variety. I was going to start the incubator again, but Ma says I had best gain a little experience with the chicks I have first. Taking it for granted that her figuring is right, and realizing how busy this little flock is keeping me, I have decided to take her advice, and await developments.

LETTER NUMBER SEVEN.

Hardacre Corners, Illinois.

It is with feeling of deep humility that I record that my first venture in a business career was a sad failure. But I will not get ahead of my story, but commence where my last letter left off. At that time I had forty-eight chicks that looked fine and healthy, and my three prize fowls that I bought of a man in the East. No one could have worked harder or done more studying than I did, but every twenty-four hours brought its own series of disasters, and every morning found me with less chicks and more sorrow.

First it was the cholera; then it was the rats. From these two causes I lost all but fifteen of my chicks. I had learned to enjoy what remained of them for the pleasure I found in seeing them grow, when one night there came an awful storm. The way it rained and blew was something awful, and the next morning when I went out I found the chicken houses were destroyed and my fifteen poor little chicks all drowned. The three prize birds were still alive, but they were a sorry-looking lot. It would have pleased me better if the prize birds had been drowned, too, as they were reminders of my failure.

Dad calls them my assets, and wants to know why I don't take advantage of the new bankruptcy law. I felt bad enough to cry, and perhaps I would have cried if I had not been so ashamed. Every time I went out into the back yard those henhouses stood up before me as monuments of my failure. I got so I hated to meet Dad. He would not say much, but his eye would twinkle and his face would broaden and he would look just as though he was about to ask me something about my business.

I made Ma promise that we would not have any more chicken cooked in the house until Dad had sort of gotten over thinking so much of it, but that did not fix things altogether. Last Sunday we did not have our regular fried chicken for breakfast, and Dad wanted to know if none of my barred stock was ripe enough to fry yet. I didn't say a word, and Ma looked solemn-like and said: "Father." Dad dropped his eyes, but I could just see the flicker of a smile that showed me what he would like to say. I appreciate Ma more than ever now, and I have told her more than once that I would leave home forever if it was not for her. She says I must not talk so, but it is a fact just the same.

But I did not tell you how I closed out my business. After the storm I buried the chicks, and was glad to get them out of sight. I was feeling better

to get them out of the way, when out stalked that infernal old barred Plymouth Rock rooster, followed by its two wives, and as the old fellow flapped his wings and crowed he just seemed to say: "You've made a fail-u-r-e," and then he would strut around and talk, and, upon my word, I believe he was telling those hens about me.

Just at this time old Sarah Lane came along and said that Dad told her I had some nice chickens that I would sell cheap, and I determined then and there that I would close out the whole business. So I asked her what she would give me for my three prize birds. She allowed that they wa'nt very pert, but that she would give me seventy cents for the three, and I let her have them. I then sold her my henhouses for three dozen eggs, with the understanding that she would send a wagon and haul them away at once. I had nothing left now but the incubator. This I tried to sell her also, but the old lady said she would not insult her hens by bringing a thing like that among them. So I toted it off up into the attic, and I hope the dust will cover it so deep that it will even drop out of my memory, and Dad's, too, for that matter.

And now, as the preacher says, thus endeth the first lesson. It was a serious one, and I am about fifty dollars in debt to Dad, besides spending about fifty dollars of my own money. I have had a long

talk with Ma about the whole thing, and after that I felt better. Do you know, I can realize something of the goodness of God when I am talking to Ma, for to me she seems exactly the same as the preacher says God is at times. I confess to her and am relieved; I go to her for sympathy in my hours of sore distress and she helps me to lift my burden. The only difference is Ma doesn't get angry and say: "Vengeance is mine!" and threaten me when I don't do just right. Do you know, when the preacher gets to talking on those lines I think more of Ma and less of——well, Ma would not like it if I said that, and perhaps the preacher doesn't know, anyway.

If it did not cost so much I would take advantage of the bankruptcy law just to play even with Dad. He makes my life miserable talking about what I owe him and asking me about my fancy fowls. Ma told me I must go to work in earnest and pay all I owe to Dad, and as Dad told me he would raise my pay to fifteen dollars a week if I would tend strictly to business and let schemes alone, I will soon be out of debt now. Ma isn't charging me any board, and I am wearing my old clothes. It's pretty tough I can tell you, for I have had to put on my Sunday suit, and between the marks of the hen yard, the lime house and the lumber yard I am obliged to refuse

all invitations to parties, keep away from church, and spend all my time either in the house or lumber yard.

I shall soon be out of debt, but my wind-up of my first business venture was an awful crushing thing to a young man who had built his hopes so high. Ma was saying the other morning that I had an imaginative mind and would make my mark yet. Ma is always saying nice, encouraging things, but Dad, as usual, spoiled it all and made me feel meaner than ever when he said: "I am glad the boy has some kind of a mind. I thought for a time he had lost it, and as for his mark, I doubt if he will ever set the river afire." Do you know that remark just put me on my mettle, and I then and there decided that I would amount to something in spite of my drawbacks.

I have not decided yet what I will do, but you may be sure I will do something, and Dad shall see the day when he will realize that he has wronged me. I have talked it all over with Ma and she told me not to be in a hurry in making a choice. She says she wants to keep me with her as long as she can. Dad overheard the last part of the remark and told her that she need not worry; that her boy would be around at meal times for some time yet. We did not say anything, Ma or I didn't, but you bet there is something in store for Dad.

As soon as I decide what line to follow I will let you know. I have about made up my mind that I am not fitted for a business man, besides it takes a business man a long time to become known to the world at large. I think now I would prefer to be a poet like Kipling, an actor like Mansfield, or a statesman like—like—say, I don't think of any statesman. I mean one whom the people all look up to, one who is thoroughly honest and at the same time one who gets rich fast. I have been wondering if you could not give me a little friendly advice. I have told you that my heart's desire is to get rich and respected, but of course you do not know as much about my ability as I do myself. Ma says I can do anything I set myself to do, and I feel that I have talents lying in all directions, but the question with me is what business or profession shall I give my life to.

When the spell comes on me I can make poetry as fast as I can think, but suppose I should decide on being a poet and the spell should not come often, I would have a hard time making a living. The spell is on me now and I will encourage it. Here goes:

The world is mine, I often think,
As I dream of my ability;
But when Dad looks over the brink
Of his glasses, I only think of agility.

And now the spell is gone. The worst of it is I never know what I am about to write, and after it is written I am as much interested in studying out the meaning of my verses as anyone else can be. I find that this verse I have written explains my case exactly. I have great confidence in myself, for I realize that I have ability, but when Dad puts on that smile of his, or, looking over his glasses, makes a cutting remark about by enthusiasm, it is like dousing a fellow in cold water, and my only thought is to get out of the way.

Ma says she would not like to have me become an actor. She said this at the table one morning and Dad said he didn't think there was any danger. Of course Dad knows I would not do anything that Ma didn't want me to. Ma likes my poetry and says if I gave more thought to it the spells would come oftener. I hardly know how to start to be a statesman, and it seems a long way from pound keeper to president, and I am not so sure that the people would vote me in as pound keeper, as I have not told the people here how much ability I have and none of them seem to have found it out.

As I said before, I want your advice, but it strikes me that the quickest way to bring myself before the public and also to make money, is in the line of poetry. The only expense is paper and pencil and I can pick

up enough of them about Dad's office. I have heard that poems often bring as high as a thousand dollars, but I expect I might be obliged to practice as much as six months before I could get half of that.

I shall await your letter of advice anxiously, as I want to put my whole time and energy into whatever I decide upon. I hope you will advise me on the line of poetry, as that is the way I feel inclined, and I have heard that a young man should follow his own inclinations as long as they are honorable. I am happy to think that I am no longer in the chicken business. I am inclined to think that was a mistake and that I should face a literary career.

LETTER NUMBER EIGHT.

Hardacre Corners, Illinois.

The world looks bright again, but I did not fully understand your letter. I read it over carefully and consulted Ma about it, and at last I decided that I would accept the part I did understand and let the rest go. You said that "poets were born, not made, and that if I were a poet I could not help it," but that "I should be considerate of my friends." Now, as I said before, Ma and I did not just understand that letter. "Poets born, not made." That sounds good, but Ma or I either could not understand it.

Then you said: "If I were a poet, I could not help it." Ma and I both understood that at first, or thought we did, but the more we studied it over the more we decided that the sentence had a strange ring to it. When we read your last sentence, which read that "I should be considerate of my friends," Ma and I both knew what that meant. It meant that if I succeeded as a poet, you wanted all of my verse. Ma felt a little hurt, I know, but I just told her it was business, and that you should not be blamed for driving a good bargain if you could, even to the getting my poetry for nothing.

Don't think that I do not appreciate your kindness to me, for I do, and I am willing to send you a letter each month, even if I do not get anything for it for awhile, and I am willing to dash off a verse or two for your amusement; but when it comes to printing any of my finished poems, that would be another matter, for you should understand that a poet must not be altogether a dreamer, but must think a little of his future. Kipling would not allow you to print his poems without paying him well for them, and my poems must not only bring me fame but wealth.

You see that I have met your business proposition with a counter proposition, and I can well afford to do it, as I have already written some very clever verse, so Ma thinks. I am thankful that I arrived at years of discretion before I commenced to write poetry, as I have not dropped into the errors that so many others have. I have not started out on spring poetry, neither have I attempted to write a parody on "The White Man's Burden."

My poetry is original, sort of

Outbursts of an overflowing soul,
  That wells up and will not be suppressed.
I write the words the soul inspires,
  And the result is peace and rest.



Reciting Poetry to Ma.

I am surprised myself to find how natural it is for me to write poetry. In fact, often when I am writing a letter on business for Dad the spell comes on me, and it seems as though thoughts would only come in poetic rhyme.

Speaking of Dad reminds me, he does not know a word of my intentions for the future and thinks I have settled down to do the bookkeeping in his office and work in the yard. I am not going to let him know, either, for I am confident he would have no faith in me and would say something discouraging. You see, Dad is from old Dutch stock, and, although his family has been in this country for generations, they still stick to the old idea that a man's real worth is decided by the amount of actual manual labor he can do. Ma is more refined and aristocratic, and it is from her side of the house that I take my sensitive disposition, my love of the beautiful and my poetic instincts.

I must tell you how strong this poetic idea has taken hold of me—

How it fills my soul with pleasure,
  How it fills my heart with joy,
How it takes all my hours of leisure,
  How it makes Ma so proud of her boy.

It is as much as I can do to keep from making the

entries on the journal in rhyme, I am so full of it. Ma rejoices with me that at last my talents have come to the front, and we have decided to keep it a profound secret from Dad for two reasons. First, so that he will not discourage me, or try to, by his sarcastic remarks; and, next, that we may give him a genuine surprise by letting him find out through the papers what a noted son he has. Of course, I don't mean to say I am noted now, but with my energy and ability I feel that there can be nothing in my path that will prove too great a difficulty for me to surmount.

There is a funny side to all of this, as well, for through my head continual rhymes are running, and it is hard at times to settle down to work, and when I do I am continually mixing poetry and business. For instance, one morning old Cy Campbell, a farmer who lives out about five miles, drove in to get a load of fencing. He is a snappy old genius, and, unlike most farmers, is always in a hurry. He opened the office door and cried out: "Here, boy, get out here and get me some fencing boards and posts and a few spikes right soon."

I smiled at the thought of his calling me a boy, and thought how small he would feel if he really knew whom he was talking to. I did not say anything unpleasant, but asked the old man a few questions about

what he wanted, and then commenced to load his team; but my brain was busy, and as he commenced to find fault with some of the No. 3 fencing I remarked, in my quiet way:

"So you think the fencing faulty,
Perhaps the nails are rusty, too;
Maybe the posts should sprout by now.
I am coming out to your house
Before this month is past and gone,
And when you show your best horse,
As I live, I'll swear it is a cow."

Say, you ought to have seen old Cy Campbell. He was struck dumb for a minute, and then he said: "By gosh, if the boy hain't turned fool poet!" I laughed in my good-natured way, for I knew that Cy was no fool and that the expression he used was only to cover his chagrin that he had found a young man so far above him in intellect and one who could improvise the right thing in the right place and talk it so that the sound would be like the music of the meadow brook.

There is something soul-inspiring about poetry. It makes a man enjoy life as nothing else can. He is never alone—the trees, the mountains and the meadow are his friends and companions. If I lack anything it is congenial companions. There does not seem to be any one in Hardacre Corners who can

either understand me or who can sympathize with me. I always rather liked Henry Burdette, but he is so matter-of-fact. I don't think he meant to hurt my feelings, but I met him one day, and as we were alone and I wanted some one to talk to on my pet theme, I spoke of the wonderful joy that the poet must feel as he went about and saw the handiwork of his Creator at every turn. I even went so far as to mention to Henry the satisfaction there was in being able to put one's thoughts into poetic expressions.

Henry gave me one of those hard, earnest looks of his and then said: "Tom, have you gone daft on poetry, like a schoolgirl?" I felt hurt for a moment, but Henry is such an honest, outspoken fellow I was sure he meant no disrespect. My first impulse was to turn and walk away; my next thought was that I would make a friend and confidant of Henry. So I told him of my determination to become a famous poet. I also told him how easy it was for me to talk and write poetry; also that I wanted to make a confidant of him, but that if he tried to discourage me it would break my heart.

"Why, my boy," said Henry, "I would not hurt your feelings for the world, but you must look at these things from a practical standpoint." This was a new idea to me, and I told him it never occurred

to me that poets needed to bother with common sense. Henry laughed loud and long, but even now I cannot see the point of the joke, if joke it were. My idea of a poet, one who is really famous, is one

Who has no thought for the morrow,
  And not very much for today;
If out of cash he can borrow,
  And no one expects him to pay.

His hair unkempt and long,
  His eyes bloodshot and blear;
His clothes must to others belong,
  As the hang upon him so queer.

The soul of this man, I recall,
  Is filled with beauty, I ween;
He's honored and petted by all,
  And lives like one in a dream.

I repeated this to Henry, and he was more than surprised. I never saw him look so queer as he said: "Why, Tom, you are quite a poet, but you should change the last verse, as that kind of a poet we only find in books. The man you depict is of another breed."

"Oh, I could add a dozen verses to those, and you would understand me better," said I. "No," said Henry, "if you change one it is all that is needed. Let me see if I cannot fix it." He had been writing down something while talking, and he handed me this:

"The man you are dreaming about
Don't savor of the poet one crumb;
The police should 'move on' the lout,
For he's only a tramp and a bum."

I have often heard that people of opposite natures make the best of friends, and I am going to make a friend of Henry Burdette. I do this for two reasons: First, because I need him, and next because I like him. Perhaps I should have put the last reason first, but I realized that I could use him before I realized that I liked him. Dad overheard me telling this to Ma, and he said he guessed I was not so different from other people.

LETTER NUMBER NINE.

Hardacre Corners, Illinois.

The unexpected has again happened, and I am really and truly in love. You are surprised, I know, for I had given you to understand that woman's charms would never again have any claims on me. I am awake to one point, however—the little love story I once told you, and the only one I ever had until now, was nothing like this. Then, the eye of the boy saw and the head was disturbed; now, the mind of the man is attracted and the heart is in a tumult of wild throbbing. Don't think for a moment this love affair turned me from my purpose of becoming a noted poet, for this is the higher love that brings out the better part of the man and gives him a new and higher aim, besides bringing to the fore the softening influence that rounds out to a more perfect degree of fullness the inborn poetic nature. The world never looked so beautiful, the fields were never so green, neither did the flowers put forth so much fragrance. Do you know I never before realized how beautifully the birds sang and how all of

God's creatures tried to show that everything made is for our good.

A few nights ago I walked out of the village thinking I would like to be for a time all by myself. There was no moon, but the stars were out in all their brilliancy and I saw the beauties of the heavens as I never saw them before. The whole heavenly canopy seemed to be set with diamonds and each crystal was of the first water. A dog bayed in the silence, and instead of thinking of the circumstance in the light of ignorant superstition, it seemed a low note of encouragement to put new life into my hopes for the future.

I have read what I have written and I can take nothing from it, but I am surprised to note that as yet I have not hinted as to who my angel is, for she is an angel if ever there were one. I will commence at the beginning and tell you, that you may enjoy in a small measure what I enjoyed to its fullness. "What I have enjoyed to its fullness, did I say?" No, I do not mean that, for more attractions do I see in my angel every day, and I feel that the best is yet to come. I must tell you how I found her, and while I am telling you I will go over again, as in a dream of love, the happiness I have already experienced. Sarah Annie Perkins is her name. Don't you think it a sweet name? I do. It is so euphonious and so

like the dear girl. I don't know why it is like her, but it is. Let me describe her: She is tall and slender, straight as an arrow, has steel gray eyes, and her hair is of a rich auburn hue; her complexion is clear and beautiful, with a stray freckle here and there, which shows off to a better advantage her soft white skin.

I was going by Charlie Kane's house one evening on my way for a solitary walk, so that I might court the muse, when Charlie called me in and asked me to tell him something about chicken raising. He said he had decided to try it on a small scale, and wanted my advice. As I came in and bade Mrs. Kane good evening, I noticed they had company, and was then introduced to Miss Perkins. I am usually able to take my part among strangers, but this was a new experience for me. When this tall girl that was so divinely fair came forward at the introduction and took my hand, I felt that something new had come into my life, something that had heretofore been lacking. The fact is, I had fallen desperately in love at first sight, but did not realize it until I had left her presence for the night. Miss Perkins had more command of herself than I, but she has confided to me since that her feelings at our first meeting were very similar to those I described as mine. I talked chickens with Charlie Kane, music with his wife and poetry with Miss Perkins, but my embar-



"I was introduced to Miss Perkins."

rassment did not fully wear off, and I am inclined to think that at times the three subjects were badly mixed. I got through the evening without any disgraceful breaks, and was surprised to find that it was twelve o'clock when I reached home. It was seven when Charlie called me in. I wondered where the time went.

Today I know that I am in love and am loved in return, and a new impetus has been given me. I must work for her as well as for myself, but it is easier than ever to write verses now. They just come of themselves, one word tumbling over the other, and forming into lines and verses almost as fast as thought can run.

Our evenings are spent together,
Our friendship is true and fast;
Not long have we been acquainted,
But we are sure our love will last.

We were out walking in the gloaming a short time after we first met. I had known her a whole week then, and I had made up my mind that I must learn my fate. How to commence was more than I knew —words would not come in prose, so I resorted to verse. I said:

"Let us rest on this log a moment,
For I have a story to tell—
A story as old as the hills are,
And I hope I may tell it well."

The declaration of love was coming next, but as we sat down on the log I had pointed to, Sarah said: "Of course you can tell it well, Mr. Clingstone, for practice makes perfect you know." Do you know, I believe the sweet thing was jealous. Sitting down beside her, and taking her hand, I said: "I have longed for the time when people would call me Mr. Clingstone, but I never thought the sound of the name would be distasteful to me. Please call me Tom, and believe me when I say that you are the only woman I ever wanted to tell the old story to." "All right, Tom, if that is what you want to be called," said she, "but don't get sentimental; let's talk of other things. Who is your father's partner in the lumber business?" I felt that she had said the first thing that came into her mind, but I also know it was her modesty that prompted it. I laughed at her and told her everybody knew that my dad had no partner and never did have, and he owned the lumber yard, owned his own house and had money in the bank besides. "But," said I, "you need not try to put me off that way; I have promised myself that I would tell the old story to you tonight." And I did tell her the story of my love, and after awhile gained her consent to be mine at some future time. It is strange how coy a woman can be, isn't it? She broke in more than twenty times while I was trying

to tell her of my love, and asked the strangest things, things that had not the least in the world to do with love and marriage. She asked me if I was the only child, and how much the lumber yard was worth, how much I thought Dad had in the bank, how much I thought the house we lived in would sell for, and a lot of other questions in the same line. I was persistent, however, and when we parted we were engaged.

There is something strange, though, about a woman in love, and I cannot help thinking how modest Miss Sarah is. She has made me promise that I will not say a word for the present about our engagement, and not drop a hint to any one that I care for her. Doesn't it beat all how a woman can tie a fellow up? I tried to get her consent for me to tell Ma about it, but she was firm, and I think too much of her to take any chances. She has even cautioned me against coming to see her until after dark, and also says I must control my feelings when we meet on the street, so no one will know we are anything to each other. She has told me something of her life and she may well be called a self-made woman. Sometimes I wonder why I was so fortunate as to win her, but I suppose she had heard of my writing poetry, or perhaps she thinks I am good looking; Ma does.

Life to me it something worth,
For she is mine, I'd have you know;
Together we'll enjoy the summer's sun,
Together we'll brave the winter's snow.

With the poet's pencil in my hand,
Writing the lines to bring us fame,
Asking no favors of the world
Save a well-earned, honest name.

LETTER NUMBER TEN.

Please do not search this letter for postmarks, and don't let any one know where I am if there is a postmark to be seen. I am deliberating on several questions just now. The first one is: "Is life worth living?" The second is: "What have I to live for?" and the third, "How in the name of all that is good am I to get a living?" Of course these remarks surprise you, but there have been wonderful happenings since I last wrote you. We are told that love is blind, that it puts a man to sleep, that it dulls the sense of justice, and we are also told several other things, all of which I am willing to believe at the present time, for the love of Sarah Annie Perkins, or Sall Ann Perkins, as I think of her now, has taken all of the sweetness out of life for me.

I will tell you how it came about: I did not exactly tell, but I was so full of love for the girl that it just cropped out, and James Henry Burdette guessed my secret. After finding out the truth about the matter James Henry told me all about her. She is an adventuress, has been married twice, and no one

knows whether both of her husbands are dead or not. I never heard a man talk so about a woman as he did, and I don't know what more he would have said if I had not stopped him, for, to tell the truth, I did not believe a word of what he said, and as soon as I could get away from him I started at once for Charlie Kane's house to tell Sarah all about it. I was mad at James Henry and more than ever in love with Miss Perkins. I felt that she had been wronged, and I intended to right things as much as possible. I got to Charlie's house about half-past nine in the morning, and as I was about to knock I heard a voice inside. That would not have stopped me, but I heard my own name. I was flattered for a moment, and could not help waiting to hear what nice things she would say about me. Imagine my surprise to hear her say: "Yes, Tom Clingstone is all right as far as he goes, and when we are married I will work the old man for a good living. I am tired of living by my wits and must rest up on some one. Tom is a simple fool, and I won't have any trouble with him." "But," said Mrs. Kane, "suppose the old man, as you call him, does not take kindly to you as Tom's wife and turns both of you off, what will you do then?" "Don't cross a bridge until you come to it, Mattie. You know what I have done, and I have lost no part of my cunning yet. I ought to have landed

the judge's son last month, but he was too slick for me. I was a little rash and overdid matters. Say, Mat, you can just bet when we are spliced I will take the poetry out of him, the chuckleheaded chump." "Sally, I don't see how you can marry a fellow that you don't respect, even for the sake of a rest, as you say." "You are slow, Mattie. I haven't lived quite as long as you, but I have had a heap more fun. Tom is the best there is within reach, and I have got to clothe up. When I get well decked out and see something worth my while, and have drained the Clingstone pond dry, I will be ready for something that is nearer my idea of what a side partner ought to be."

Just at this time a troop of children came around the house, led by Charlie Kane's eldest, and as they saw me they commenced to holler, "Hello, Tom! Hello, Tom! Did you come to get married? Thought you could not come till after dark. Oh, Aunt Sally is a peach, and she's going to make you walk Spanish, whatever that is." I cannot write how I felt, but I was as weak as a rag. The noise made by the boys roused the two women inside, and the next I knew the door opened and I was seized by the collar and snatched inside in less time than it takes to think it. When I came to myself I was all in a heap on the floor and Miss Perkins was standing over me with a

flatiron. I was sure she was going to brain me, and such a looking woman I hope never to see again. Her red hair looked as though it had never been combed for weeks, and those freckles I used to think as beauty spots stood out as big as dollars, and her gray eyes seemed to look through the center of two of them. Mrs. Kane burst into a laugh, but I did not feel like laughing. To say that Miss Perkins was mad does not begin to express it. She raised the flatiron and said: "Lie still, you fool; shut up, Mattie." Then, turning her attention to me again, she said: "And so you were listening, were you? How long had you been there? Tell me, quick, now, or I will smash your soft head for you." I don't know what I said, but she made me sit up in a chair and then started at me again. "Now, Tom, you have heard something, and I don't care much what. All I have got to say is if you will marry me to-day I will make you a good wife, but if you refuse me I will sue you for breach of promise to-morrow, and I will ruin both you and your father. Now, make up your mind, and be quick about it; and I have a notion to beat your brains out now if you refuse." Say, now, Mr. Editor, what would you have done? Perhaps I was a coward, but I promised right then and there that I would marry her as soon as I could get ready. "Well," said Miss Perkins, "I am ready right now. Mattie,

you go for the minister, and I'll hang on to my game." Mrs. Kane started for the minister and my wife-to-be commenced giving me a few lessons as to how I should act when the minister arrived. At this junction the door opened and in walked Charlie Kane. This seemed to confuse my intended, and as Charlie left the door open I bolted. I never stopped running until I landed in Ma's kitchen. Thirty minutes from that time I was on a train bound West. I had told my story, got what money she had on hand, grabbed some mail that had come for me and just barely caught the next train out of town. Ma promised to send my clothes as soon as I got located.

A sigh of relief escaped me as soon as the train pulled out of the station. It sounded like the noise that comes from the escape valve of a locomotive that is overburdened with steam. I then went through my pockets and took an inventory of my money and worldly possessions. As I was doing this I spied my mail, which I had not thought of before, and here must be recorded another failure. My mail consisted of returned manuscripts. I felt as though the last claim to life had been taken from me, and that all there was left for me to do was to end my miserable existence the best I could. The only question with me was as to how it could be done in order to have it over as soon as possible. When I got on the

train at Hardacre Corners I paid my fare as far as the conductor went, and then, deciding to go further, I paid again, which I hope has taken me so far from my native state that the reflection of Sally Perkins' red hair cannot blind me.

Arriving at my destination, I decided not to die, but, as the minister says, "man proposes and God disposes." I might starve to death. I have been here four days and have found nothing to do. Am paying ten cents a night for lodging and as little as possible for my meals. I am not so sure Dad will send me any money; in fact, I am only sure of one thing, and that is, if I could run across one of those kicking machines, such as I saw pictured in a paper once, I would back up to it with a relish. I have met some pretty good fellows at the hotel where I board, but they are all "down on their luck," as they express it, and they are not an overly nice crowd to be with.

It was a great blow to me to find out that the publishers in the East did not appreciate my poetry. There is no doubt these things go by favoritism, and until I get something of a pull with a publishing house, perhaps it will be just as well not to try for success in that line again. I had a queer experience last night. A woman spoke to me as I was walking down the street, and it sounded so much like the voice

of Miss Perkins that I bolted down the street at a breakneck pace. The girl laughed, and a couple of policemen, thinking there was something wrong, took after me, crying, "Stop thief! Stop thief!" But I was no thief, and did not stop. Darkness favored me, and my pursuers were soon outdistanced. I made for the outskirts of the town, and, finding a little, uninhabited saddle-backed house, I crawled through a half-opened window and there passed the night. I slept some, but most of the time was spent in contrasting my former condition, when I was a respected young man among the people who had known me all my life, and my present state, where I was hunted by the police without cause, afraid of any voice that in the least resembled that of Miss Perkins, almost fainted when I saw a head of red hair, and was even ready to dive into the first alley at the sight of a white horse. My address you will find on a separate paper. Kindly send me a check, but don't write it with red ink. Red gives me such a chill.

LETTER NUMBER ELEVEN.

Omaha, Nebraska.

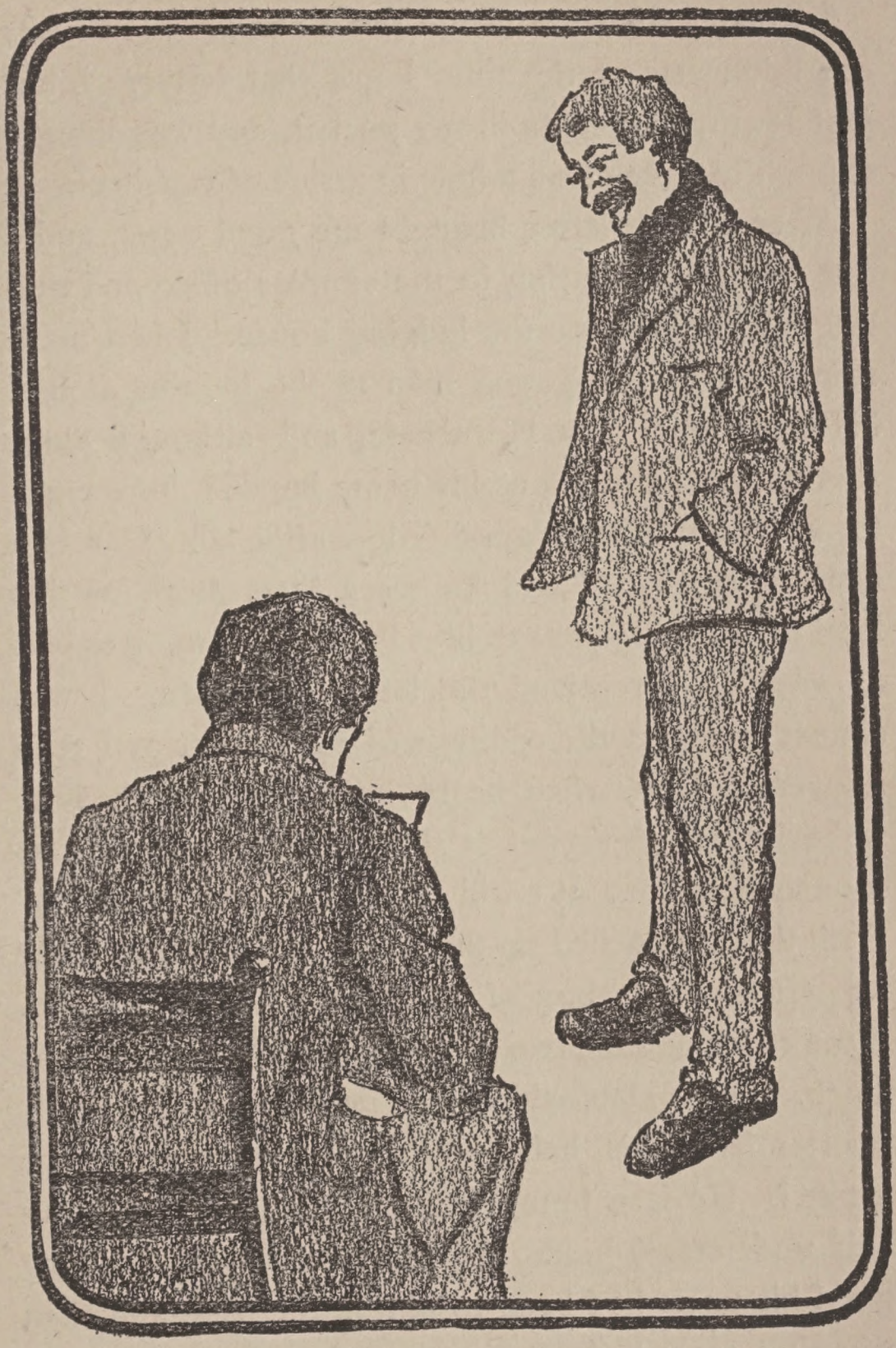
I received your letter and check, which although small, was quite acceptable. I hardly know how to begin, when it comes to telling you the adventures I have passed through in the past month, and I don't see how I am to get it into one page of your paper. I have learned several things, and one that seems to me as important as any is, that in order to be a successful writer, one must write about things that he knows and stick close to the truth.

My own daily experience is all that I know, and I know of no reason why I should not stick to the truth; in fact I could no nothing else, for there seems to be no chance to enlarge upon or embellish it. When I wrote you last I was out of work, nearly out of money, and my clothes had not arrived from home, but I had decided not to throw my young life away, and the next morning, after spending the night in the saddle-backed house spoken of in my previous letter, I started in with renewed energy to find something to do. I know but little of any business but lumber, and my first effort was in that direction, but

with prices going up and every one having all they could do, no one seemed to have a chance for me. The first man I appealed to I asked for a position as bookkeeper, and his answer was, "What, with those hands?" A half-dozen men that were in the office roared with laughter. When I asked the next man, I put my hands behind me, and the man looked at my feet and said: "No." After making two more trials I tried to get on as salesman, but there were no openings that I could find. One man said he would give me a chance to drive a team if I knew the city well enough, but he might as well have offered me an interest in the business by my paying ten thousand dollars.

About this time a letter came from Ma, and also my clothes. Ma's letter was not very encouraging. Here it is. Just look it over for yourself:

"My Dear Tom:—Your Dad has forbidden my sending you any money, and tells me to write to you that you must shirk for yourself now; but, my dear son, keep a stout heart. Dad will soon feel different, I am sure, and as soon as he does he will send you some money. I sent your clothes by express prepaid, and I am sure by this time you will get work enough among lumbermen, or will as soon as you tell them who you are. Be a good boy, and don't fail to go to church every Sunday. Your affectionate, Ma."



"I read this letter to Dan."

I wonder what Ma would say if she knew what my condition was at the time I got that letter. I had just twenty-five cents in my pocket, and was hungry enough to have eaten a hole in a side of raw beef.

After all, the letter brought me good news, and I lost no time in getting to the express office and getting my trunk up to the lodging house. I had made some talk to one young man at the lodging house, his name was Dan Hornbeam, and although some said he was as tough as his name implied, he seemed to me to be rather a good fellow after all. Dan is a little older than I and knows a little more of this kind of life, and it was to him I went with my troubles as soon as I received the letter from Ma. I was almost crying at the coolness of Ma's letter as I read it over to Dan, when he broke in with, "Say, Kid, we're in luck; let's get at that box of dry goods as soon as possible. We will call on our uncle at once." With that we opened up the trunk, and the first thing we struck was a box of lunch that Ma had put in. It took Dan and me two days to get through with that lunch. Once Dan said it was next thing to getting a letter from his baby. What do you suppose he meant? He is a funny fellow, Dan is, and I don't half understand him. He told me lots about how good his uncle had been to him in the past, and then when we came to look him up, I found he wasn't his

uncle at all, only a Jew pawnbroker, who took my trunk full of clothes and lent us fifteen dollars on them. We divided the money even, as that was the right way between friends, so Dan said, and then as Dan's money was spent before mine was we divided again. This Dan said was according to the code. I didn't know what the code was, but I made up my mind that I would not allow people to think that I was so blamed ignorant.

After I got the seven dollars for my clothes I didn't try so hard for work, as, after thinking it over, I was sure Dad would send for me soon. The funds were getting low, and I had divided again with Dan, when I received the following letter from Dad. It was written from Hardacre Corners, and here it is:

"To Thomas Clingstone, Esq.:—Now that you have started out for yourself, I feel that the least I can do for you is to write you a letter of advice. As a baby I was proud of you. As a school boy I had my doubts about you, but when you gained your twenty-first year and you went crazy over a freckle-faced, red-headed, cross-eyed adventuress, and did not have pluck enough to stand up to the fight, but went off like a whipped cur, my doubts fled. I knew then that all the money I had spent on you could have been used to better advantage buying hogs, and it would have bought a nice bunch, too. I propose

to give you some good advice, but as no one follows good advice, this will no doubt be thrown away on you; at the same time, if you have one particle of respect for your mother or myself, I trust you will walk in the path I have laid out for you. The government is in need of men to go to the Philippine Islands. I don't think you would make much of a soldier, but you are tall and wide, and might make a good mark for some of those poor Filipinos, who seem to have hard work hitting anything anyway. It might perhaps be easier to go and throw yourself in the river, but you would miss the glory of dying for your country, and your Ma and I would feel that all our care had been lost on you. I have made my will and left my property to your uncle Joseph. I have done this for two reasons—first, because I want to impress it upon you that you must paddle for yourself from now on, and second, so that it would not be a temptation for some designing woman to steal you. Your well-wisher, John Clingstone."

I read this letter to Dan, and I thought he would burst a blood vessel from laughing. "Say," says he, "but the old man is a lolly pop, isn't he? Are you going to enlist to please him?" I decided at once not to enlist, and that I was never cut out for a soldier. I have also decided that Mr. John Clingstone and my Ma will wait a long time before they hear

from me again, unless they should write again and take back what they have said. There is no question but that I have been helped some in these matters by my friend, Dan Hornbeam, for he is one of those chaps who, as he says, "makes the best of a bad bargain," and that all bargains that come his way are bad. When Dad's letter came we knew our chances for assistance were gone, and as our money was about used up, Dan secured a place for me to wash dishes in a restaurant. I would not have cared so much, but it is one of those cheap places where they advertise to give you a square meal for ten cents. Dan said he would have taken this place himself, but that washing dishes made his hands cramp, and he didn't dare tackle it. He said the last time he tried it his hand cramped on some silverware and gave him lots of trouble. A fellow learns something every day out here. I had heard of writer's cramp and telegrapher's cramp, but this is the first time I ever heard of dishwasher's cramp. Dan is looking out for a better job for me, although he says we are both pretty comfortable now. You see we both get our meals and a chance to bunk in the stable loft, in payment for my work, and Dan stands outside sometimes and tells the people to come in and get a square for ten cents.

I am writing this in the loft, and Dan is holding

the lantern and asking me how much I think you will pay me for this letter, and how soon I think I will get it. I don't want you to take this for a hint, but you wrote me once that the successful writer was the truthful writer, and if ever success were needed by Tom and Dan, that time is right now.

I put Dan in with myself always, because he says we are pals now and must stick together and divide with each other always. So far the dividing has been all on my side, but Dan says it happens so sometimes, and that now that Alger has left the cabinet, he is looking for more favorable conditions. I asked him what General Alger had to do with the case, and he got excited and talked for a half hour. I don't remember all he said, but I do recollect a few of his ringing remarks. Here are some of them: "I want you to understand, Tom, that this is a government of the people, by the people and for the people, and that we are the people; also that every move that is made in Washington touches every patriotic citizen within the length and breadth of this grand country. You ask what effect the resignation of General Alger will have on our conditions. I cannot explain this to you but this much I do know, that as soon as I heard of it, I went out and borrowed a dollar of a man I hardly knew, and I am sure that if General Otis had been recalled at the same time that Gen. Alger re-

signed, I could have struck the fellow for a V, and got it just as easy. Why," continued Dan, "it was since Alger resigned that a gentleman was walking on Sixteenth street, about two o'clock one morning, and a policeman stopped him, asking what he was doing loose at that time in the morning, and he said that he had just heard that Alger had resigned, and that he was a business man and had decided since he heard the news from Washington to open a jeweler's shop on Sixteenth street; and the policeman shook hands with him when they parted. Sure enough the man did open a jewelry store on Sixteenth street that very morning, and cleaned up about a thousand dollars, and they haven't caught him yet." Dan talked this stuff off so fast that I could scarce keep up with him, and I am impressed with the fact that he is a very deep young man, with much more education than I ever gave him credit for. He says we will come out on top yet, and I am somewhat encouraged.

LETTER NUMBER TWELVE.

Omaha, Nebraska.

It seems a long time since I wrote you my last letter, and I am still a dishwasher at the ten-cent restaurant. Dan says I am doing well, as the scullery maid left and I have been promoted to head dishwasher. The next step will be second cook, but I cannot say it is just to my liking. I wanted to get Dan to take my place for awhile and let me go out and hunt some other job, but he says I had best stick right to a good thing when I have it, and he can look for a better job as well as I can.

Dan has sort of constituted himself my manager, so he says, and he tells me this is the right way to do. The way he explains it is, that a man wears out fast if he is obliged to work with his head and his hands at the same time, so he thought best for me to do the manual labor and let him do the brain work. I asked him last week when he thought he could get me another job, and he said he had been trying to get something to suit my ability, but the jobs he had struck so far had either been above or below me. I pressed him for an explanation, and he said he had

found two jobs, one was a cashier in a bank and the other was chambermaid in a livery stable, either of which, he said, was not exactly in my line. I asked him how he knew of these jobs, and he said the livery man was a man he had known in more flush times; and that the bank president and the chief of police had both been talking to him about the bank being short a cashier. "You see, it was this way," said Dan; "a friend of mine put the cashier to sleep and some folks seem to think that I was there when the nap commenced. They sweat me for awhile, but I don't guess they opened any gold mine of information. I hardly think you could get that job, though, Tom, and as for the stable—well, the job you have brings us good returns."

I am getting a little sharper than I once was, and can understand some of Dan's talk, and, of course, I knew that if I got the job of chambermaid at a livery stable, my duties would be to make up the beds for the horses, but I did not follow him about the bank deal and I told him that I did not think I would care for a job even as cashier of a bank if it were only to last while the cashier was asleep. Tom said he guessed I was all right, but some of the people his friends worked on slept a good long while.

Some one stole my coat last week and here is where Dan showed himself a true friend. He took

my measure and the next day he brought me another coat. It fits about as well as my old one, and is but little worn. I asked him how he got it and he said he struck the "fence" for it. I did not ask any more questions, for I don't want to be considered green, but I do wish I could understand Dan's lingo. A year ago now I was here attending the fair, and it makes me feel sort of tough to think of the bad luck I have had since. At that time I held a good position in Dad's lumber yard and Ma doted on me; now I feel that I am forgotten by friends and parents, and for some reason cannot get a start in life. I work early and late on these old dirty pots, kettles and dishes, and it seems as though there were no end to them. I had a little rest one day last week and I begin to think Dan is the best friend I ever had, for he hired another fellow to do my work and took me to the exposition. There were four of us together. I don't know what the other two fellows' names were; Dan called one of them Freckles and the other one Bute. The last one was anything but a beauty, but Freckles was all right, for he was not only freckled but also red-headed. He reminded me of the cause of all my troubles and I trembled every time he spoke. Dan paid all the bills and took us to all the side shows, and bought all the beer the boys would drink. I would not drink beer, so he bought me popcorn and

lemonade. Dan must have spent all of ten dollars that night. The next day I asked him where he got his money, and he told me that he had just received an allowance from his uncle's estate. I asked him when his uncle died, and he said he wasn't exactly dead and he wasn't dead easy either, but he managed to make him shell out a little once in awhile. Dan is sure enough a queer chap, and sometimes I think he is not just the fellow I ought to have for a pal, as he calls it, but he is smart, and when I begin to question him so that I can understand better he confounds me with his knowledge. I was telling him the other day about my boss, the owner of the restaurant, and how he scolded me, and Dan said what I needed was a little Christian Science. "Why," said he, "you don't understand these things, Tom; you worry your head about the boss and the way he treats you, when, if you only thought so, you could rise above these things and realize that you are in a better position than he is. He thinks he owns the hash-house and you work for him, but he only thinks so. You have just as much right to think so as he has, and if you want to you can think you own half the city. Now, Tom, I can prove to you that you are right well off; you know the Bible says it is better to give than to receive. While it is true you don't receive much for your labor, you are giving me a place to get a square

three times a day, and that ought to make you happy. You are always talking about getting a better job where you can make some money. Now, Tom, you are wrong. There isn't a man in the country that is worth a million who isn't growing old before his time worrying because they don't put pockets in shrouds. What you need is to get your mind in proper shape. You don't hear me making a fuss because I ain't president of a street railway company; not much! I have a good friend in you, Tom. I get three squares a day and once in awhile I draw a little from my uncle. When it gets a little cooler and people sleep better nights Freckles, Bute and I are going to form a syndicate and see if we can't raise a little dust. You can go with us if you like, and after we have turned an honest penny we will go South for our health." I asked him what kind of business they were going into, and he said they had not decided yet, but that Freckles was an expert locksmith and they might do a little at that until they got an opening. I have made up my mind that I had better stick to Dan, especially after he gave me this talk.

Since writing the above I have had another talk with Dan and I feel better yet. Say, he is a wonder. We were up in the barn loft, where we sleep; I happened to remark that this dirty hole was not much like the room I had at home, with its comfortable

bed and clean linen. Dan looked at me for a little and then laughed outright. "Why," said he, "you can have any kind of a room you want if you only think so. Look around you and you most likely think you see a couple of cheap cots, three broken chairs and a spit-kid on the bare floor. I don't look at these things as you do. Those cots there are the finest of spring beds, on which are the best of hair mattresses, with sheets as white as the driven snow; those pillows are big and filled with the best of down; on the floor is a rich Turkish rug, so soft that when you step your feet sink in just as though you were treading on meadow moss; the ceiling is high and frescoed in the most artistic designs, and the walls are hung with pictures that would put the old masters to shame. Hark! I hear the boy coming up the hall now, and I can hear the clink of the ice in the pitcher that Gene Field wrote about so beautifully. Oh, here he comes now." And Dan reached out his hand and went through the motions of taking a glass and drinking, and it was so perfectly natural that it was cooling to us both. Dan then put his hand in his vest pocket and went through the motions of tipping the boy off with a quarter, and, for a fact, I could see the boy as he took the quarter and, smilingly thanking Dan, withdrew. I shut my eyes and said: "Dan, do go on and talk some more. You

have made me feel better than I felt before since I thought I was on the verge of getting rich in the chicken business." Dan laughed and said that hot air was cheap, but if a fellow knew how to apply it, it was a great cooler. For an educated fellow Dan uses some queer phrases and some that are paradoxical in the extreme, but as I look back on the past few months of my life, and realize what a failure I have been, I haven't the courage to even ask him to make himself more clear to me. The fact is Dan is deep, but one can't help liking him. But to go back to the evening when he changed our room into such a dream of a place: I kept my eyes closed, for I had gotten hold of Dan's idea, and I wanted to retain the beautiful vision as long as I could. I was in hopes he would go on again in the same strain, but he branched off into something else that gave me even a better opinion of him. Dan is sure enough a reader, and he says himself that he is past master in political economy. I don't exactly know what that means, but I suppose it is some course of schooling he has taken. It was only last night that this talk occurred, and I have not seen Dan since, but I remember every word he said. He commenced by saying: "Tom, while you rest on that bed that is worth more than any other bed in Omaha this moment, I want to tell you something I have been thinking of lately. Some-

times I have thought I ought to have gone into politics just for the good of my country. The fact is, Tom, Billey McKinley isn't just the man to be at the head of this government; he is too slow. Months ago those heathens in the Philippine Islands should have been taught a lesson that would have brought them to terms. You see, Tom, we bought those black-skinned devils and paid Spain $20,000,000 for them. Of course, we were intending to do the right thing by them and would have done so if they would have let us, but you can't do anything for a fellow if he won't have it. Now, as I said before, McKinley is not the man for the place. He has proved it, for he never yet has found out what those fellows are fighting for. I know all about it, for I have had private advices. You see, those Filipinos got mad at once as soon as they found out the price they were sold for, as after they had figured it up they found it only amounted to about a dollar and six bits apiece. Mac, not knowing this, but thinking they wanted their independence, sent Otis out there to whip them into being good citizens. As soon as Otis arrived a friend of mine told him what the trouble was, and he sent word to the native congress and asked them if they would be satisfied if he killed off enough Filipinos so that what remained would make the $20,000,000 figure out three dollars apiece. They sent back

word that if he would kill off enough to make it five they would be satisfied, and then Otis sent for McArthur and Lawton and went to work; but he is slow." I don't know how much longer Dan talked, but I went to sleep and dreamed of my luxurious apartments. I never had more beautiful dreams, but morning came and with the first installment came summons to my duties, made bearable only by my only friend Dan. I wonder where he is.

LETTER NUMBER THIRTEEN.

Coldeck, Nebraska.

The way of the transgressor is hard, but it seems to me that the way of Tom Clingstone, who hasn't knowingly transgressed any law of the land, is about even up with the worst of the bunch. One thing I am sure of, however; my eyes are opened and I see things clearer than I once did. Some time ago I wrote you that I had lost confidence in women, and my confidence in men has been so shaken that I hardly know as I will ever trust any one again. It seems a hard thing to say, but after you have my experience for the past month, perhaps you will agree with me. When I wrote you before, I had every confidence in Dan Hornbeam, but I was mistaken in him, and this is the way I found him out:

One evening shortly after writing you my last letter and mailing it, finding it was eleven o'clock, I crept up to the barn loft and went to bed. Thinking over what Dan had told me, I dropped asleep, to dream of the beautiful side of my case which I could not seem to see with my eyes open. I must have

been asleep about two hours, when I was rudely aroused and found myself confronted by two policemen, who ordered me to dress at once. To say I was confused, doesn't begin to tell it, but as I had decided some days before to follow Dan's advice and take things as they come, I said nothing, but began to dress in a dazed sort of a way.

While I was dressing, the officers were looking through the loft, and, could I believe my eyes, they found bolts of silk, watches, diamonds and the good Lord only knows what else. Out from under my cot, which you remember Dan told me, "was worth more money than any bed in Omaha," they took the richest of the goods. I made just one exclamation of surprise, and one of the officers said: "Shut up, young man; don't try to run any innocence on us; it won't work, and will be the harder for you in the end." So I took his advice and kept quiet. As soon as I was dressed, I was handcuffed, and one of the officers took me to the station. Just thing of it—me, Tom Clingstone, who wouldn't hurt a fly, with handcuffs on!

When we got to the police station I was asked a few questions, and then the handcuffs were taken off and I was put in a big cell, with about fifteen of the worst looking bums and tramps it has ever been my luck to see. I was not much surprised to find among the crowd my old friend Dan, also Freckles and Bute.

When I saw the stolen articles in my room, the whole thing was so plain to me, that I wondered that I had not seen through it before. The friends I had taken up with were just a lot of thieves, and Dan was the leader. When I realized how things stood, and before I arrived at the station, I thought I could kill Dan, but no one could be mad at Dan long. He is too good-natured.

As soon as I was in the cage with the rest and the door shut on me, Dan came forward and taking me by the hand, said: "Welcome to our private apartments, old boy; Freckles was just saying that he thought you would drive around to see us, as soon as you found where we were located. Come over to our side of the parlor and we will provide you with one of our softest divans. It will not be as rich a bed as you are in the habit of sleeping on, Tom, but it has the elements of more sociability." With this he led me over to where the other fellows were, kicked a drunk out of a place beside of Bute and we all lay down together. I hadn't said a word, I couldn't, but Dan was full of talk and as soon as we got straightened out, he said, "You never have done any time, have you, Tom?" "No." "I thought not, but all things come to those who wait, and perhaps your chance is near to do a little time. Of course you know I will do what I can to keep you from it, but

you may have to, for some of the judges here in Omaha do not have a very good opinion of my veracity. And now Tom, let me give you a little piece of advice. Don't fool any more time in bad company. I have tried it and it doesn't pay, so you take the benefit of my advice and keep clear of it. With me, it is different, a little excitement helps me out, and if the time isn't too long that they deal out to me, it's all right, for it gives me a better chance to think and plan, but you are different. Tom, you would never make a successful knave, you are not bright enough."

I felt too bad to talk, so I let Dan talk me to sleep again. The next morning we were all brought before the judge, and strange as it may appear, the boys all said I was not in the steal, and although the judge took some stock in what they said and let me off, he did it with the promise that I should leave town inside of twenty-four hours. The other three boys were sent back to jail to appear later before another court, as near as I could find out, but you can just bet, I did not need any twenty-four hours to get out of a town that had come so near furnishing me with free board and lodging.

As soon as I was out on the street and realized that I was free, I started on foot in the opposite direction from the restaurant. I say I started on foot,

but I don't know how else I could have started, for I was broke, and all the clothes I had in the world were on my back. I did not look to see which way I was going, my only thought being to get out of the town where the people had misjudged me so thoroughly. I did not run for I realized that I had a long way to go and that I could get over more ground by a steady walk. It was about eleven o'clock when I left the court-room, and it was sundown when I slacked my pace and allowed myself to think of something to eat. It looked as though I would have to go without supper, or beg, but I was saved from either one, for in a few moments, I came upon a couple of tramps who were just starting in to get supper by the side of a stream. My hunger made me bold and I offered to get the meal ready, if I could be allowed to share it with them. The offer was accepted, for they had begged more than they could eat, and were not averse to employing a servant on my terms.

After I had the meal ready we sat down on the ground and ate together, and without a question it was the sweetest meal I ever ate. They were a queer pair, these new found friends of mine, and they made lots of sport of their ability to hire a servant. It seems they had been in this section of the country about as long as they thought it wise to stay, and had decided to steal a ride on a freight train that very

night, to some place further West. I accepted their invitation to go with them, as my desire was to put more distance between myself and Omaha. I thought they would teach me how to get away and then I would leave them, for I had found out by sad experience that "a man is known by the company he keeps." After supper, we went down to the railroad station to wait for the freight train, but a passenger train coming along, we all three boarded the blind baggage and were soon putting miles between us and Omaha. At every station where the railroad men were looking for tramps, we would get off and then jump on again as the train started, but at last the conductor got mad and told the brakeman "to ride the blind baggage and get rid of us." That knocked me out and I was left behind, but my two friends, just as the train got under good headway, caught hold of some rods under the cars and swung themselves on to the brake beams, and I was left alone. I wasn't much sorry, for I was tired and worn out, and crawling into a lumber yard near by, I was soon sound asleep, dreaming of the home I once had and of the pies my Ma made.

When I awoke the next morning the sun was high in the heavens. Not wishing to be seen hiding in a lumber yard, I got outside the place and took a look at the village. It was a nice little place, but I was hungry and I tramped along, trying to get up courage

enough to ask for something to eat. I had made up my mind to call at the next house I came to and offer to work for my dinner, when I heard a woman scream, and it was no cheap scream either. Then I saw a horse coming on a dead run; he was hitched to a carriage, and in the carriage was the woman of the scream, also a man. "Here is the chance to earn my dinner," said I, and stepping aside, as though to let the horse pass, I swung around, grabbed a part of the harness and the next instant I was astride of the animal. The reins had broken, but I pulled myself towards his neck and catching hold of his nose, I shut off his wind. This was an old trick that I had learned a long time before and much easier than it looks. When the horse stopped, he fell, and as I had gotten somewhat mixed up in the harness, I was partially under him when he fell. I clung to his nose however, until assistance arrived, and then I fainted. I don't know how long I was unconscious, but when I came to I heard some one say: "Put him on the stretcher and carry him to my house; he has saved both our lives and there is nothing too good for him." Dad told me once, "that when I had nothing particular to say, I had best keep still," and as I had never acted on his advice before, I decided to commence right then.

They carried me to Mr. Dean's house, this was the

man's name whose horse I had stopped, and who, with his daughter, was out driving when the accident occurred. They put me to bed and the doctor came. I knew I did not need any doctor, but I thought best to let him find that out, so I kept still and this is what I heard. The doctor, after poking me in my joints: "He doesn't seem to be hurt externally, no bones broken that I can see." Mr. Dean: "Do all you can for him, doctor; he is a brave young man and he must not be the loser for what he did for Betty and me." Betty, just coming into the room: "Will he live, doctor? O, I hope he will, it would be awful if he should die for us and we never have a chance to thank him. Is he nice looking?" The doctor: "Well, Betty, he might have taken a prize in a baby show, but you know, they change wonderfully after that."

This was getting a little too hard for me, besides I was hungry, so I groaned and turned so I could open my eye and see the girl who was standing in the doorway. Say! but she was a dream, but she vanished as I moved. I was sorry for a moment that I had sworn off on women. I opened my eyes then and Mr. Dean said: "Thank God, he is coming to himself," and I wished to goodness that I was coming to someone else, for as Tom Clingstone, I had never seemed to be a success. "What do you want, my son?" said Mr. Dean. And in spite of my resolu-

tions not to speak, I answered, "Something to eat." For three days I was in a sort of a heaven with all I wanted to eat, bathed, and redressed in some cast-off clothes of Charlie Dean's, the son who was off at college, and by the way, these cast-off clothes were far ahead of anything I had ever owned and made me look quite the gentleman. I overcame my dislike to women enough to let Betty comb my hair, which she said "was the most beautiful she ever saw." No one ever told me that before, but now as I look at myself in the glass, I guess she is about right.

I am almost sorry I ever said I would never take any more stock in women, for she is just all right. I would like to describe her to you, but I don't suppose it would interest you, but if any man would let her stand in a street car he would be mean enough to steal sheep. Mr. Dean owns the best lumber yard here, and after I had played off sick as long as I dared to, I went to work for him. I keep the books and do some of the selling and am getting along all right. Dan used to say "that my feet did not track," but I am training them and taking better care of my personal appearance. I won't own that Betty or the thought of her has anything to do with it, but I may make a man of myself yet; who knows?

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LETTER NUMBER FOURTEEN.

Coldeck, Nebraska.

I have so much to tell you that I hardly know where to commence. I have heard it said that some time in the life of every man the chance comes to him to make something of himself, and if he loses that chance or lets it go by without catching on, his chances are slim for ever getting another one. I heard this a long time ago at a lecture given in a schoolhouse back in Hardacre Corners, and I have often thought of it and wondered if my chance would ever come. I have stopped wondering, for I am sure the chance is here. I have gotten hold of the chance and I am going to hang to it with all my strength, and say! my strength is no small item, for since I have been away from Illinois, I have thickened up and am running pretty strong to muscle. Do you know, I am sort o' proud of that muscle of mine. Betty talks of my size and strength, and how I threw the horse, to everybody she sees and it makes me blush sometimes, but I don't say it is not pleasant to hear.

I am still boarding at the house of my employer, Mr. Dean, and, of course, I see lots of his daughter, Betty. Now, don't think I am going to break my word and fall in love again. I have gotten beyond that foolishness, I hope. I know that twenty-one years of age, or nearly twenty-two, as I am now, doesn't seem very old to put away all thoughts of love, but I have a future to work out and I am going to work it out alone. While I am writing of Betty, I am impressed to say a few things of her just to let you know how different she is from other girls. She is bright, with ever ready wit, and besides this, she is such a sweet looking girl. In reading over these last two sentences I begin to feel discouraged about being able to describe her. You will say that that same description will fit thousands of girls in Chicago, but I want to tell you that another girl like Betty doesn't live. Let me try another way to describe her. She is not tall, neither is she short. She is just the right height. She is neither stout nor very slim. In fact, she is just about the right size. She is neither a blonde nor a brunette. Her hair is brown and silky, and her complexion is—is—well, it's just right, and as for features; how can I describe her features? She is just a dream, and that is all I am going to try to say about her.

I want to tell you a little something about my-

self, and how I am hanging on to my chance. When I landed into the good graces of this family by stopping the runaway, I came up minus a suit of clothes, or so nearly so that another one had to be furnished. I was furnished with a suit from the cast-off wardrobe of Charlie Dean, and it was not more than a week before I dropped to the fact that Charlie must have been as much as two sizes smaller than me when he wore them and much more of a dude than I ever was. Mr. Dean seemed to have noticed it about the same time, as he invited me down to the clothing store and selected a business suit for me and had it charged to himself. He did the right thing for me and fitted me out from hat to shoes. Of course, I had something to say about the styles, but I just told the store man on the quiet to use his judgment and fit me out with the things I would look the best in. The result was that when I got my new clothes on I will bet my own Ma would not have known me. Do you know, that suit of clothes raised me about seventy-five feet in my own estimation. When I went in to dinner that day Betty was waiting for me. Usually I don't see her at noon, for Mr. Dean goes to dinner first and I usually eat alone, after Mr. Dean comes back to the office, but, as I said, Betty was waiting for me. I could feel that her eyes were upon me as I came up the walk, and no man ever felt prouder than I. As

I sat down to the table Betty looked me over again, and then the strangest thing happened. She burst out laughing, and laughed until I thought she would have a fit. Her mother came in to find out what the matter was, and Betty could not tell her. Talk about your peals of laughter. There was peals upon peals, until it seemed as though the whole house were filled with them. Somehow I did not feel like laughing. I felt that there must be something wrong about me, and I looked myself over, and this seemed to be a signal for more peals. Betty is sharp. She saw that I was getting more or less confused, and she restrained herself from further laughter, and said:

"Please, Tom, don't get vexed at me, but as I saw you come in looking so nice in your new suit, I could not help but think of how you looked in that short sleeved coat and those high water pants of Charlie's and I couldn't help it," and with this she gave us a few more peals. She got over the last attack quite readily, and her mother told her she ought to be ashamed of herself. This I could not allow, and I said:

"Mrs. Dean, do not say that to her. She should be commended for resisting the temptation she must have had in not laughing at me when I had those clothes on." I guess this must have been a joke, for then they both laughed.

It is embarrassing to eat when anyone is looking at you; at all events, it is for me, and as both mother and daughter sat and watched me all through the meal, I was somewhat nervous on account of it. Mr. Dean is quite a graceful man, and I thought "now that I am dressed so nicely, I must be graceful also," so I tried to get up from the table as I had seen him. I must have made a "miscue" somewhere, for my feet got tangled and the next I knew I was lying on the floor. As I fell I caught the tablecloth and a few of the dishes came down on me. A tumbler half filled with water capsized into my face. When I got on to my feet I felt as though I were disgraced for all time, but Betty came to my relief. She told me of the same kind of an accident that happened to some one she had heard of a long time before, and then she asked me if I would promise to forgive her for laughing about the clothes. It almost made the tears come into my eyes to see how penitent the dear girl was, and I said:

"Miss Betty, I have nothing to forgive. I have made up my mind that some night when I get through work and I don't have anything else to do, I will go out in the woods and have a good laugh about those clothes myself, and I can never thank you enough for not laughing at them when I had them on. Talk about forgiving you, I could not think of

your being under obligations to me, but you can rest assured that there is nothing on earth I would not do for you."

"Is that a fact, Tom?"

"It is a fact! you just try me."

"And will you be sure and do anything I ask you to?"

"Go on, Miss Betty," and do you know the thought occurred to me "suppose she should ask me to marry her," and the cold sweat stood out in big drops on my forehead.

"Well, what is it, Miss Betty?"

"You have promised, you know."

"Yes, go on."

"Well, Tom, I want you to go to dancing school."

"To dancing school!"

"Yes, to dancing school."

"With you?"

"With me! Oh, no, I am not going."

"But why must I go to dancing school?"

"Because you have promised to, and, you know, you would do anything for me."

And with this she slipped out of the room and was gone, leaving me to wonder what it all meant.

Say, that wasn't sweat on my forehead after all. It was some of that water that fell on me and which I failed to wipe off. Perhaps I would not have felt so

bad after all if she had asked me to marry her, but, of course, I am glad she didn't.

At first I thought I would not pay any attention to the dancing school business, but I decided that I would not be living up to my part of the agreement if I shirked, so I hunted up the only dancing master in the town, and finding he was just about starting a class of beginners, I enrolled my name with the rest, and since then I have had three dancing lessons; that is to say, that is what Mr. Slocumb, the dancing master, calls them, but I don't see much dancing about a row of people standing up and making jerkwater steps across the floor. I always knew I had been well supplied with hands and feet, but I never realized how little control I had of my feet until I tried to guide them with my mind. Then to make it worse, Mr. Slocumb told me that I must not look at them. A girl spoke up and said: "He has got to look somewhere," and then they all laughed. The dancing master got red in the face and reprimanded the class. He looked savage at the girl that spoke out, but I felt like thanking her for standing up for me. I kicked another fellow in the shins by accident the last night we were up there and he limped down to the other end of the line. I think he put on a good deal of it. I am interested in this thing, and I am going to learn it if the floor holds out. The teacher told me I had

better practice what spare time I had down at the lumber yard, and I find that isn't such a bad idea. I went through all the steps down in the shingle shed the other day while Deacon Jones was deciding whether he would order the best red cedar shingles for the widow Holcomb's house, or put on number one pine and make her think they were just as good. I had just gotten through with the steps when he ordered up the number one pine, and he eased his conscience by saying that he took the job pretty cheap anyhow.

It isn't all smooth sailing here in Coldeck, though. Some of the young men are pretty wild and like to be considered tough. Some of the tough ones seemed to take a dislike to me and would go out of their way to make it unpleasant for me. For a time I got along without any trouble, but one day when a couple of them were trying to pick a fuss with me, they made the mistake of bringing in the name of Betty Dean. Well, the result was I spent that night in the town cage and the two toughs went to the hospital. They are out now, but they don't look very pretty yet. Mr. Dean got me out the next morning, and as soon as he found out how it came about, he made the Sheriff apologize for arresting me. Mr. Dean has never opened his head about it since and I felt a little worried about it until I found out that Betty cried be-

cause I lay in jail on her account, and then I made up my mind that I hadn't made any very bad break anyhow.

The sequel to this possibly does not show up quite so well in my favor, but as I am alive to tell the story, you have no need to be alarmed. The complete rout that I gave those two toughs, added to the fact that the rest of the fresh kids fought shy of me, must have swelled my head a little, for I carried a noticeable swagger for a number of days. One day Mike O'Brien, who keeps the blacksmith shop a little distance from the lumber yard, called me in and told me that he liked to see a good plucky kid, but that he hated to see me make a "mark" of myself. I told him I was well able to take care of myself, and that I had proved it. One word brought on another, until he offered to bet me ten dollars to one that he could whip me in five minutes. I laid my dollar on the anvil, and he covered it with a ten and handed it to his helper. I smiled at the easy way I was to make ten dollars, for Mike is about thirty years old and weighs about 140 pounds to my 180. Besides, I am much taller and longer armed. In fact, I was sure I had every advantage over him. The helper shut the outside door and Mike and I took our positions in the center of the shop, where he usually shoes horses. Mike gave the word for the fight to begin, and I

started for my victim. Three separate times I remember of picking myself up from among the old horseshoes, dirt and scraps of iron, but the fourth time I went down I lay still long enough to tell Mike that the dollar was his, and that I would like to have him bring in a mule and show me how he did it. Then I got up and shook hands with the best-hearted little Irishman I ever met. He did not want to keep the dollar, but I told him I would never speak to him again if he refused it. We have had two or three friendly rounds since. In fact, I am taking three kinds of lessons now; dancing, boxing and keeping a civil tongue in my head.

LETTER NUMBER FIFTEEN.

Coldeck, Nebraska.

A month seems a short time, but a whole lot of things can happen in a month. Besides this, there are many things working out our destiny that we do not know of, and when these things culminate, we think there has more happened in a given time than there really has. After reading over the above, I cannot help but feel a little proud of myself and my ability to properly express my thoughts upon paper. Of course, there is a shadow of doubt about my having gotten all of those words in their proper places, but it sounds well to me and the chances are, readers who find mistakes will have charity enough to forgive me.

As the lecturer says, we will now take up the thread of our discourse. You will remember, it is now about six months since I left my native town of Hardacre Corners, and that I left with only one thought in my mind—that was to get out of the reach of Sally Ann Perkins, a red-headed fright that wanted to marry me. Since that time, and until this month, I have only

had two letters from home; one from Ma, which was very cool, and one from Dad, which was very sarcastic. You will no doubt be as surprised as I was to know that I received another letter from Ma the first of this month, which seemed more like her old self, and also one from Dad, which has some news and more surprises in it for me. Ma's letter is sacred, and I will keep it to myself, but I send you Dad's letter, as in no other way could you understand it:

"Thomas Clingstone, Esq., Coldeck, Nebraska.—My Only Son: You are no doubt surprised to know that I have your address, and perhaps you will be more surprised to know that I knew of all your doings in Omaha. A friend of mine, who is in the lumber business there and who saw you with me at the Omaha exposition, saw you when you first landed in Omaha, and wrote me about it. After that, I kept track of you through the police. This was easy for them, as you trained while in the city with a class of people that the police were interested in. Your record since you started out for yourself has been somewhat varied, and society in general would not look upon you as a howling success. Let me recount one side of it, and it is as other people would see it: In the first place, you went daft over an addle-pated adventuress; then, as other cowards do, you ran away and left your Ma and me to bear the disgrace of

the thing. After this, you fell among thieves, and they used you for their own benefit, finally landing you in jail with themselves. It was the chief of police that was the means of getting you out, and not Dan Hornbeam, as you supposed. Since accident placed you among decent people, you could not resist the temptation to fight and get arrested. Now, Tom, that is a pretty poor record, but you have a little something to your credit. You have always shown a willingness to work at whatever you could get to do, and even the thieves who were your companions could see that you would not be dishonest. It is for these good qualities that I am willing to own you for my son and if you will improve the chance that has now opened to you, I will still have some hopes of you and your Ma shall knit you a pair of woolen socks for Christmas.

"P. S. If you ever get money enough to come back to Hardacre Corners, you need have no fears of Miss Perkins, for she married a third-rate preacher, who has a little congregation down at Bells Corners, about a month after you left. I understand she runs the preacher, the church and the Corners, but there are people who doubt the lady's piety being on a very high plane."

Now, what do you think of that for a letter? Of course, I am pleased to know that I am still his only

son. In fact, I should be surprised had it been any different. I realize the fact, too, that my record does not show up quite as well as it might, but I am glad that the old man finds something to commend. I don't just understand what he means about Ma and the socks, for he knows that, of all things on earth, I hate those socks my Ma makes. They are as thick as a board and I have to wear number ten shoes to cover them, when eights will fit me when I buy store socks, but Dad is funny sometimes; perhaps that is one of his jokes. Say, but isn't it a joke about that Perkins girl marrying the preacher? He will want all of his faith in God to get along with that peach. If I had his address, I think I would write him a letter of congratulations and ask him if he did not think he should send me a "Ten" for relinquishing my claims upon her. Those claims were not easy to relinquish either, if I remember right.

But I must tell you how I am progressing in my studies, for I remember I told you I was taking lessons in boxing, dancing and keeping a civil tongue in my head. Mike O'Brien says that the better boxer a man is, the easier it is for him to keep a civil tongue in his head; that it is the empty barrel that makes the most noise, and that the little man is the most likely to go about with a chip on his shoulder. I guess Mike is all right in his philosophy and I propose to

agree with him until I can get on to those quick turns of his which always end by laying me in the dirt, with him standing over me telling me where I pushed up the wrong guard, or something in that line. When it comes to the dancing lessons, I am sure I have made a whole lot of improvement. We used to line up each side of the room, the boys on one side and the girls on the other, and spend all of our time counting and taking steps. Now we mix up with the girls a little, and do the two-step and waltz. When I first commenced I thought I never would get those feet of mine around on time, but I am now getting pretty fair control of them, and, while it is true that occasionally one of them gets unruly and shoots off in the wrong direction, as a general thing I keep them within bounds.

I have written this much without saying a word about my employer's daughter, Betty Dean. This, of course, shows that I can control my pen, if I do not always control my mind. Of course I am not in love withBetty Dean, for those things have gone out of my life, but, at the same time, no one who knows her could help but think of her. I have puzzled my head often as to why she wanted me to attend dancing school. If she had been going herself I would perhaps have thought it was because she took an interest in me, but why she should want me to go, when

she is not to be there, it is more than I can fathom. I asked her point blank one day why she had asked me to go to dancing school, and her answer was that that was a secret that could only be divulged at the end of the school. Betty is very nice to me, and there are times when I am inclined to think she was looking into the future when she asked me to take dancing lessons. I had thought the matter over a good deal and one day I thought to draw her out on the subject and commenced in this way:

"Miss Betty, do you know the Darling girls that live over on the West Side?"

"Yes, Tom, I have met them and they are very nice girls, but why do you ask?"

"Oh! nothing particular, only I think Mattie Darling is rather nice looking, and I wondered if you knew her."

"Mattie? That is the oldest one. Why, she is considered quite a beauty in this town, Tom. Have you succeeded in interesting her?"

"What do you mean, Miss Betty, by my interesting her? I don't think she would go around a four-acre block to get away from me, or to keep from meeting me, but I am not sure that I have interested her much yet. I just wanted to ask your opinion of her."

"Oh, I have the best of an opinion of her, Tom, for she is not only good-looking, but she is bright and

interesting. Besides, her father owns a nice farm and is quite well-off in money and stocks of various kinds. She would make you a fine wife, and you would make no mistake if you would cast your line in that direction."

"But, Miss Betty, I am not casting my line anywhere, but would you want me to marry her? Now, be honest with me."

"Well, let me see. I don't think I would want you to marry her; not just yet. You see, Tom, father thinks you are splendid about the yard and a good hand with the books, and if you should marry Mattie it might be that Mr. Darling would think he needed you about the farm, and in that case father would be obliged to hunt up another man."

"But, Miss Betty, leaving your father and Mr. Darling both out of the whole business, how would you feel about it?"

"Oh, I would think it was just lovely, for I dote on weddings. Would you have a dress suit and white gloves, and would she be dressed all in white, with orange blossoms in her hair?"

"Hold on, Miss Betty, you are way ahead on this romance. I am afraid I shall be obliged to disappoint you about the wedding, for as yet I have not even a speaking acquaintance with the lady in question."

"Is that so? I am very much disappointed. I had just made up my mind to being an invited guest at a grand wedding, and here you go and spoil it all by telling me there is nothing in it, but tell me, what did you mean by asking me about the girl, anyway?"

"I don't hardly know, Miss Betty. I wanted to say something and I happened to think of her and that was all there was to it."

"And do you get so hard up for subjects when you are with me? I must say I feel flattered."

"Now, Miss Betty, don't talk that way. I am sure there is plenty to talk to you about without talking of Mattie Darling, or any other girl. I am sorry I spoke of her, and never will again if you say so."

At this Betty laughed and said: "Why should I care whom you talk about, but you make me laugh, for you are such a paradox. You are dense and, at the same time, transparent. Ta ta, Tom, get some one to introduce you to Miss Darling, and then I will talk to you some more."

With this she left me, and I would give all the money I have saved up if I knew what she was driving at. I sat up half of that night asking myself if I cared anything for Betty Dean, but I don't. I settled that, but there is another, a more serious question. Does she think anything of me? If she does I am truly sorry for her, but how can I find out? I

thought to find out when I spoke to her of Mattie Darling, but the ruse did not work. Now, Mr. Editor, what do you think, and if she does think anything of me, what is my duty in the matter? Should I leave my position and start anew in another place, or should I break all of my resolves and marry? Why can't girls be honest anyway, and not beat about the bush?

LETTER NUMBER SIXTEEN.

Coldeck, Nebraska.

Another Christmas has come and gone, and this is the first one I ever spent away from home. I did not miss the old home as much as I expected to, and the reason, most likely, lies in the fact that the people at my new home did so much to make me feel that I was one of them. This reminds me of a few lines I once wrote about girls, for it was the girls that made my Christmas so pleasant:

Stranger beauties never grew,
With their faces framed in curls;
And I loved them ere I knew,
Time was wasted with those girls.

Perhaps you do not understand this, but I do. You see, I wrote it one time after spending all of my extra change on two sisters one evening at a church social. I inadvertently let them know that I had spent my last cent. They shook their curly heads at me and excused themselves. Since then every time a girl decides to be a sister to me, I have gone off by myself and repeated those lines. In all of my experience I don't think I was ever placed in as

peculiar a position as I am now, and I am forced to improvise this:

Oh! woman, lovely woman,
  On that day when you appear
Before the bar of God,
  You'll have cause to drop a tear.
  Thinking of the past, you'll fear
The Maker's chastening rod.

Of course, all of this dropping off into rhyme means something you have already guessed. I know I shall be obliged to tell you all about it, for in no other way would you realize just how I am placed. Betty Dean, the girl I saved by catching the runaway horse, is the cause of my unsettled state of mind just at this present time. When I came to this town I thought I had decided that for all time I would never trouble myself about any girl again, and, as you must know, I have fought against it the best I knew, but it is all off now. I could no more help loving Betty Dean than I could help breathing. She is as beautiful as a dream, to commence with, and besides that, she is so kind to every one that her friends comprise all that know her. I said she was kind to every one. Well, I guess she means to be, but perhaps she doesn't know just how much I dwell on all she says and does. Sometimes she will put herself out to say something nice to me, and my

hopes will be raised to the seventh heaven of bliss, but just as I get ready to say something for myself, she says something that acts as a wet blanket on a small fire, for it simply puts me out.

Betty Dean, however, is not the cause of all my troubles, but to give you a better understanding of them I must take you back to the Saturday night before Christmas. Charlie Dean was home from school and brought a friend with him, by the name of Clay Sterling, so the boys and myself, with Mr. and Mrs. Dean and a few relatives of the family, made quite a lively party at the Christmas tree that had been fixed up for that evening. As we were mostly grown people, Mr. Dean said he would take the place of Santa Claus and give out the presents. We had a jolly time all around, and we all got presents. I was well supplied, receiving something from each member of the family. I knew where all my presents came from except one, and that was a sofa cushion. It was a beauty, and had cost some one a lot of work. It was brought to the house by a boy that no one seemed to know, and attached to it was a note on which was written "For Mr. Thomas Clingstone." Inside the note was written, in a beautiful hand:

"Dear Sir: Please accept this pillow from an admiring friend. You are my ideal of a man, and were

it not for a custom that deprives my sex of the right to speak, I should certainly have made myself known to you before this. As it is, I can only admire you at a distance, unless you prove yourself a true knight and search me out."

Say, Mr. Editor, you don't know how funny that note made me feel. I did not intend to show it to anyone, but they all commenced to quiz me about having a sweetheart and keeping it to myself. When I told them I did not know whom the pillow and note were from I could see that they did not believe me, so in self-defense I showed the note. I don't know whether I did the right thing or not, but I could not afford to have my word doubted. It is a queer place to be in; to be in love with one girl, and have another one in love with you, and at the same time not know who the girl is that is in love with you.

To add to my complication of troubles, there seems to be an understanding of some kind between Betty and Mr. Clay Sterling that I am not at all pleased about. It seems that Clay has been here several times and makes himself quite at home in the family. He is an orphan, and has a snug little fortune in his own right, while I have nothing but my wages, and no prospects other than what I can work out by my own hands. He isn't built on the same plan as I am, and I could lick him hands down. I get a little

satisfaction out of that, but girls are so stuck on money and style that if he is really after Betty, I am afraid my chances are not as good as his.

Perhaps I might be a little cast down on the whole matter if it were not for the girl that is in love with me, and whom I have never been able to find out, but the thought that some one appreciates my worth, even if I don't know her, holds me together. Every time I go down street I feel that the unknown, as Betty calls her, may be watching me, and it braces me up. I hope she is good looking and lovable. Whoever she is, I cannot help but feel that she showed her good sense in falling in love with me. I would not let the folks at the house know, not for the world, how this whole thing bothers me, but they are always talking about it. A few days ago, Betty came into the lumber office to see her father, and the first thing she said to me was:

"Well, Sir Knight, have you discovered the unknown yet?"

"What do you mean, Miss Betty?" said I, making believe I did not know.

"What do I mean? Why, the young lady who sent you that pillow, and that sweet note, of course."

"Oh! yes, I know now, but I am not hunting up people who write anonymous letters."

"But this case is different, Tom. Here is a young

lady that is no doubt handsome and nice, who knows of no other way to address you, and she loves you, too, Tom, just think of that. Besides she may be rich and an extra good catch."

"Miss Betty," said I, thinking to get in a good shot, "some people do not think as much of riches as some other people."

"So much the better, Tom, then you will not care whether the young lady has riches or not."

"Don't you care for riches?"

"Oh! yes, riches are all right if all of the other requirements are there."

"That means if the young man is tall, slim, good looking, and a law student?"

"I am sure I don't know what you mean, Tom, or what you are talking about, but if some one I did not know gave me such an evidence of love as a certain young lady gave you, I should try and hunt them up right away. A loving heart is not found every day."

"Now, Miss Betty, suppose some one should tell you that they loved you, would not that be much better?"

"Why, Tom, has some nice young lady told you that?"

"No, I was only supposing the case. Suppose I should tell you that I love you?"

"You suppose queer things, Tom. I could imagine you stopping a runaway horse, or a dozen of them, and I could imagine you knocking down a few men, just for the fun of the thing, but to think of your ever getting down on your knees; putting your hands together; rolling up your eyes, and telling a girl that you loved the ground she walked on, or that you could not live without her smile. Oh! dear, Oh! dear, it is really too rich," and she went off into a paroxysm of mirth that was beyond anything I had ever heard before.

Just at this moment, Mr. Dean came in. Betty was hanging onto her side and trying to stop laughing. I was standing about five feet from her. If I looked as I felt, I would most likely have made a good artist's model for a mule. Mr. Dean looked first at Betty and then at me, and back at Betty again. Then he said:

"You seem to be having all the fun to yourself, Betty, while Tom looks as though he had been asked to address a camp-meeting and had forgotten his text. Why don't you even the thing up, little girl?"

The little girl got herself in check about this time, and said: "Oh! papa, it was so funny. I was trying to get Tom interested in his unknown friend, and he tried to make me believe he had forgotten all about her."

Say, but wasn't I relieved. I thought for a moment she was going to give me away, but I might have known she wasn't that kind of a girl. She is a trump, but I don't understand her. The next day after Betty was at the office, I received a note through the mail which puzzled me a good deal. It was written in a strange hand and said:

"Dear Mr. Clingstone: I hope you will not think me forward, but I very much desire to have a few words with you. However, I will leave it entirely with you and will arrange it in this way. To-morrow noon, when you leave the office for your dinner, you will pass the corner of Cary and Third streets. If you are willing that one who very much admires you shall have a few words with you, you will have in each hand, as you pass the corner mentioned, a white handkerchief. I will be anxiously watching, and if the white handkerchiefs are both shown, you can return after dinner and I will be standing on the corner. When I see you coming I will turn my back towards you and wait until you approach, and then, Oh! then, I hope to look into your eyes and there read your forgiveness for my forward action. Please grant the meeting, and until then, dearest, adieu."

There was no name signed to this note, and I was puzzled. At the same time, I felt that I was now to see the one who had declared her love for me, and it

stirred me up quite a little. Perhaps, in my excitement, I for the time forgot my tender feeling for Miss Betty. I cannot say whether this was or was not so. The next morning I provided myself with two white handkerchiefs, and, although I had plenty to do all of the forenoon, I thought twelve o'clock would never come. As soon as the two hands came together on the noon hour I was on my way to the corner mentioned. Just before I arrived at that point, I got out the two handkerchiefs, holding one in each hand, so as to make them show as much as possible. I walked past the appointed place with all the dignity I could command. I saw no one, but I knew I was being seen by one who appreciated me for myself, and it made me feel every inch a man.

There was one thing that had troubled me. I had compared the writing of the note with the one that came with the pillow on Christmas and found they were not at all alike, but I decided that as the girl was a little worried at herself for what she was doing, she had disguised her handwriting.

But to go back to the eventful noon. I was so worked up over the matter that I ate but little dinner, and Mrs. Dean desired to know if I were ailing in any way. I excused myself as soon as possible and went to my room; put a little bear grease on my hair; put on a new tie; brushed off my clothes, and

started out, with a wildly beating heart. As soon as I came in sight of the corner my heart beat wilder than ever, for there stood a sylph-like female figure. I could see that she was tall and slender; that she had on a gray dress, a tight fitting jacket, or coat, and a good sized hat, with a veil. I dared not run, but it seemed as though I could not get there quick enough to see what I felt sure I should find, a beautiful face. As I came up to her, I found enough of my voice to say:

"Were you waiting for me, lady?"

She did not speak, but turned towards me and raised her veil, discovering to me the blackest face I ever saw on a human being. I only remember to have cried out: "Great heavens," and starting into a run, I never stopped until I had arrived at the office.

Now, what do you think of that for luck? Of course, I can see through it all. This wretch was waiting there for some one, and my unknown friend was scared off, but better luck next time, I say. Don't you?

LETTER NUMBER SEVENTEEN.

Coldeck, Nebraska.

It was very kind of you to write to me that letter and explain to me why I should not anticipate in the first of my letters what I had to tell in the last of them. I will try and be governed by what you have written me, but I think you are setting a man a mighty hard task, for if a fellow is in love, and things are coming his way, he feels something like a bottle of Mumm's Extra Dry with the cork out, and he will run over at the mouth just as quick.

Then again, if the same man gets up with a seal-brown taste in his mouth, and thinks about the way his best girl had turned him down the night before for some other chap, he at once thinks the world is against him, and you can't expect to hear him whistling "I love my love in the morning" and put the same amount of soul in it that he would under other circumstances.

I have watched and waited in vain for another letter to come from my unknown love, not because I care who or what she is, but just to have the satis-

faction of proving that I could resist making a fool of myself, as I did the last time. What a jay I must have been walking by that corner with a handkerchief in each hand, just because some one, who would not sign their name, asked me in a letter to do it. I have been wondering lately if I will ever have the good sense that is generally attributed to geese, but it seems as though I could only see my shortcomings by looking backward, and that the knowledge of them does not help me as I run afoul of new propositions.

From words that have been dropped occasionally, I have decided that the girl who loved me was a myth, and that, now that Clay Sterling and Charlie Dean have gone back to school, I will hear no more of the unknown. If it was Mr. Clay Sterling, I think I have evened up on him, and it happened in this way: Clay is a good skater, and he allowed no chance to get by without showing off his graces in that direction. Betty is a good skater, also, and Charlie Dean is very fair; as for myself, I could beat them all out on distance, but because I cannot write my name on the ice and do a lot of fancy business, Clay was always inclined to show me off to disadvantage before Betty when he could.

One evening we were all out on the pond, with most of the young people of the town present. Clay

was showing off his fancy skating to an admiring crowd when all at once, as I was about to ask Betty to skate with me, Clay slid in, took Betty's two hands, and they glided off from the rest of us. Now, what I know I should have done was to have taken some other girl and not minded about Clay and Betty, but that I could not do. This was about the fiftieth time that he had done something similar, and every time it drove me into the sulks. I turned and skated off by myself, taking an opposite direction and going around the island to the narrower body of water, a place where but few cared to go, unless after the coldest of weather, as it was so secreted as to be sheltered from the north winds, and was much less liable to be safe skating ground.

I cared but little about the thickness of the ice; in fact, I was desperate. I wanted only a chance to do some daring deed, and to show that I was willing to do it, even if I lost my life in so doing. I skated around alone, and found to my surprise that the ice was perfectly safe, but there was an occasional air hole that must be avoided. Standing by one of these holes I thought how easy it would be to end my misery, and perhaps I might have gotten up courage to have taken a cold bath had it not been that I heard two well-known laughs; one was the joyous laugh of Betty, the other the half sarcastic laugh of

Clay Sterling. I felt that they had been talking of me, and it made me feel bitter.

The thought came into my mind to do something devilish, but what? Then the desire came to steal the girl away from him, but how? Just then I heard a cracking in the ice, such as we often hear when there is not the least danger, but it was enough to give me an idea, and I cried out at the top of my voice: "Thin ice! Thin ice! Separate at once; Betty, make for the shore; Clay, skate for the island." Quick as thought they separated, Betty making for the main land and I after her, intent on telling her the joke and leaving Clay in the lurch. Before I had overtaken her, however, an unearthly yell sounded on our ears. We looked around, but Clay was nowhere to be seen. He was down among the fishes, having slid into one of the numerous air holes that I had been examining.

Perhaps you think I was scared, knowing as how I was in fault, but I was in my glory. Here was the kind of a chance I had been wanting. As we heard the yell Betty and I had just reached the bank. I caught her in my arms and seated her on the bank, saying to her: "Sit here and I will save him for you." I could not help this little shot, even if Clay was taking a cold bath.

Tearing a board from a fence near by, I was soon

alongside of the hole where Clay had disappeared. I laid down the board and waited, knowing that my rival would come up where he went down, as there could be no current in the pond. This thought had no more occurred to me than I felt something directly underneath me. I lost no time in investigating and made out, by reaching as far as I could under the ice, to grasp Clay by the hair. I pulled him out into the open and got his head above water, but it was no use, for he had already taken in too much water. He must be gotten out and that quickly. The board I brought answered a good purpose, as it kept the ice from breaking under me, and my extra strength served me a better purpose, as I was enabled to pull the young man out without help from any one. As I landed him on the ice I discovered Miss Betty standing within a few feet of me watching the whole thing. She had not said a word so far, but as I straightened up after pulling Clay out she said:

"Tom, tell me what to do, quick. Will I go for some one, or stay by him? You know everything, Tom; tell me."

Now, what do you think of that? A woman that could see all of that and never scream once; brave enough to do anything, and calm enough to want to do only the right thing. Well, she did the right thing by doing nothing, for she gave me strength to

do more. I picked up Mr. Clay Sterling and, throwing him over my shoulder, as though he had been a sheep pelt, I caught Betty by the hand and said: "Come."

In a minute we were skating faster than Betty ever skated before in her life, even if I did have one hundred and thirty pounds thrown over one shoulder. We had a mile or more to go to get to the other people on the pond, and my idea was to roll my patient on a barrel to get the water out of him, as soon as I got where the crowd was and where I could get help. But when we arrived there my shoulder had acted as a barrel to the extent that there was no water in him, and the air had been just cold enough to freeze his clothes.

The boys relieved me of my burden; wrapped him up in robes, bundled him into a sleigh and drove him home, Charlie Dean going with him, while Betty and I took off our skates and went home on foot. We did not say much at first. I was a little worried for fear they would find out that I had put a job on them, and I realized that if they did, nothing would prevent them from thinking that it was my intention to get Clay into the air hole, when the fact of the case was I only wanted to get the girl away from him, just to make him ridiculous. I had succeeded beyond my wildest expectations, and, as I thought of what a

figure he must have cut as I had him over my shoulder, I felt very much inclined to laugh. I checked myself and said: "I do hope Mr. Sterling is all right."

"So do I," says Betty; "but why are you especially anxious about him?"

"Because I have been thinking about the whole thing, and especially of that ride he had, and I want to laugh so bad."

"Tom, you ought to be ashamed of yourself to talk that way about anyone that has been unfortunate. I have a mind not to speak to you again."

"Excuse me, Miss Betty. I did not know you were so much in love with him. Would you have put on black in case I had not fished him out?"

Just at this moment I received a stinging slap across my face, and Betty left me and ran like a deer for the house. A moment later I found her in her mother's arms, crying as though her heart would break. What she was crying about no one seemed to know. Clay had been put to bed, and the doctor had pronounced him all right.

Soon the lower part of the house was crowded with people, who wanted to know how it all happened. Clay had told them that I had saved his life; Betty had only cried, and I had nothing to say. The next day I found myself a hero. Betty and Clay had told

the whole story, and I lost nothing by the telling. They say the Lord takes care of His own, but as I feel a little delicacy about claiming to belong to the Lord, I have thought that the old Nick takes care of his people also.

The fact of my pulling Clay out of the pond has been quite an ad. for Mr. Dean's lumber yard, and farmers that have always traded down at the next town come and buy here now, just to have a little talk about it, and to see the man who could skate a mile with a man on his shoulder. Mr. Dean has raised my wages, and says I have given him a pointer on advertising. Mrs. Dean pets me, and tells me how proud she is of me, but I am wearing the same sized hat I did last month. I don't know what would happen, though, if I could capture Betty as completely as I seem to have the rest of the family. Even Charlie Dean, who did not notice me at all at first, has decided that my acquaintance is worth cultivating. Betty alone stands aloof from me. She has said but little since the night of the pond experience, but she looks at me so strangely that I am completely at my wit's end to know what to think.

I have been thinking lately "What fools these mortals be," not as I have thought about Miss Betty, Oh! no, but as I have thought of how that ice accident put me in condition to make acquaintances wherever

I wanted to. People speak to me now who never recognized me before, and at the dancing school I am quite a lion.

Do you know, Mr. Editor, I have decided that there are two of me. I always knew that I had a queer make-up, but I got hold of a book called Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde a short time ago, and that showed me just where I stood. I don't mean to say that either of me has an inclination to be wicked or cruel, but I realize that there is one Tom Clingstone who is desperately in love with Betty Dean and who would be willing to serve seven years for her, as we read that Jacob did for Rachel in olden times. This Tom Clingstone has but one idea, and that is to be constant to the one purpose. He is strong and honest of purpose, and loves with a strength that would pass the understanding of most people.

There is, however, a second Tom Clingstone who keeps repeating to Tom Clingstone No. 1 such things as these: "She doesn't love you. Why do you bother with her?" "It is better to marry a girl who loves you than to marry a girl whom you love and who cares nothing for you." "Go in and get some other girl, and show Miss Betty Dean that you are a man, and that you can live without her." When Tom Clingstone No. 1 holds sway I am badly smitten but I am miserable, but when Tom No. 2 gets hold of the reins

I am reckless, and there is a sort of dare-devil satisfaction in being reckless.

Soon after the affair on the pond I was at the dancing school and had the satisfaction of knowing that Miss Mattie Darling asked to be introduced to me. She has been attending the school as a sort of chaperone for her younger sister, and has taken no part in the dance up to the time she asked for an introduction to me. Of course, I felt proud, for she is considered the prettiest girl in the village, and besides that, her people are among the best and richest in the town. She is taller than Betty, and has black hair. She is no handsomer than Betty, but her beauty is of a different type.

I guess that Tom Clingstone No. 2 must have gotten the upper hand about this time, for there was a reckless satisfaction in knowing that I had for a moment put away the thoughts of Betty for this lovely dark-eyed queen. I asked her to waltz with me, and she surprised me by accepting. I don't think I ever danced so well, and I told her that she was the first person that I had ever enjoyed dancing with.

"Oh!" said she, "you are a flatterer, are you? I did not suppose such a brave and daring man, as you are said to be, would stoop to flattery."

I thought at first that poor old fool Tom had made another mistake, but somehow I believe she rather

liked it after all. After the school was out that night I went home with the Darling girls, and left their brother Dan to go home with his sweetheart. Mattie is a nice girl, and I am afraid that Tom Clingstone No. 2 is almost in love with her already. At all events, the next day at the lumber yard when old Jobe Spaulding asked me if those were the best posts we had I said "Yes, dear." You see, he asked that question just as I was day-dreaming about Miss Mattie, and I thought it was she that asked me something.

It was lucky for me that old Jobe was as deaf as the posts he was looking at, or I would have had an explanation to make. As it was, my face burned for half an hour, and I kicked myself and resolved at once to be more faithful to my employer, and to drive all thoughts of girls from my head during working hours.

I have made up my mind I will not worry about Betty Dean any more, and at the same time I cannot help but think that if I should happen to marry one of old man Darling's farms, with a tall, black-haired, black-eyed girl on it, Betty might think she had made a mistake. After all, Clay is better looking than I am; has better chances in life, and more money, and if he gets the girl I can have the satisfaction of knowing that I was the means of cooling him off once anyhow.

LETTER NUMBER EIGHTEEN.

Coldeck, Nebraska.

I guess it's my luck to have strange adventures, and it seems as though all the new things that spring up it is my luck to investigate. Of course you know about the lumber convention that was held in Omaha the latter part of last month. Well, Mr. Dean went, and left me to run the yard. The convention opened Tuesday, and Mr. Dean went down Monday night and took Mrs. Dean and Betty with him. Do you know, I felt awful bad to see Betty go, and I don't believe it is best for a young girl to travel much until she gets married and her husband can go along to take care of her. Then another thing. She is liable to see lots of traveling men, and those traveling men I am more afraid of than any one else. They can size up a pretty girl quicker than you could count three, and they get so smooth selling goods that they get to slip into the good graces of man, woman and child alike.

I started to write you about an adventure I had while the family were away, but my love for Betty made my pencil go off after her. It was Tuesday, the

first day of the convention, about eleven o'clock in the morning, and I was figuring a bill of lumber that some one had sent in, when a stranger entered the office. He was a neat looking chap, with his suit of broadcloth, his wide turn-down collar and white tie. He said he just called in to pass the time of day and ask a few questions about the village. He told me he was a divinity student, and as he had been studying very hard he had been ordered by the doctors to give up for awhile and take a little rest. I rather took to him, he was so well informed about things in general, and besides that, he seemed to have the whole Bible at his tongue's end. I'm not so much on religion, but I do like to see a fellow who does pretend to be, that is on to his job.

This fellow was quite tall, but rather slim; was about twenty-five years of age, and looked the student. I was sorry for him, he looked so frail. We got to be quite good friends, and I was thinking that I would ask him up to the hotel for dinner. You see, I stopped at the hotel while the family were away at Omaha. Just at this time, however, a man stepped inside the office and said:

"Good day, gentlemen; this is pretty cold weather we are having. I just called in to know if you could tell me anything about Mr. Jarvis J. Rogers. I think he lives out this way somewhere. What I want to

know is where to find him, and also what kind of a man he is on a trade. You see," he added, "I am buying horses through this country, and as I heard Mr. Rogers had some likely ones to sell, I thought I would get posted on him before I went out there."

I had been looking the fellow over, and he looked the horse buyer from the crown of his hat to the sole of his shoes. He was of medium height; well built, and had the appearance of being a hard man to handle. He was a jolly fellow and seemed to know just where to put in the right word. I told him where Mr. Rogers lived, and that I had heard the old man knew the worth of a good horse as well as the next one.

"That is all right," said he. "I have the greatest respect for a man who knows his business. I know mine, and here is the proof," pulling out a roll of greenbacks. "I have made money buying and selling horses, and I don't care a d—m who knows it."

I looked at the young student to see how he took the swear words, and his face was a picture of disgust. I had noticed that he did not take to the horse trader very well, all the time, and I wasn't much surprised, although I did not see any harm in the horse man. I ventured to say to the student that he had another object in view besides making money.

"Oh! yes," said the student, "there are souls to

be saved, and as long as I can do something for the Lord, the making or laying by of the filthy lucre will have but little charm for me," and he said something about taking no heed for the morrow and that sufficient unto the day was the evil thereof. I did not exactly catch on to it all, but it seemed to please the horse trader, for he said:

"Right you are, pardner, them's my sentiments exactly. I used to read the Bible when a boy, and lots of them ideas have stuck to me ever since. You bet I don't take no thought for the morrow, not if I can skin a man out in a good horse trade to-day. In our business we look out for the suckers that we run across each day, never doubting but we will find others for the morrow. I got an old deacon to knock off ten dollars on a horse trade once, just because I answered him out of the Bible. I caught on to the fact that he was a very pious man, and after I had looked the horse over he asked me how I wanted to try him. My answer was 'we put bits in horses' mouths that we may guide them and we turn about their whole body.' 'Well,' said the deacon, seeming never to have heard it before, 'that's no revelation to me.' 'No!' said I, 'St. John gave it as one of his revelations a good many years ago,' and the deacon, not knowing whether I was right or wrong, was touched, and I touched him again when we made the trade

and saved ten dollars for remembrance of that horse verse in the Bible." And then, looking at me, he nodded towards the student and said: "You bet, I believe in a man being at the head of his 'profesh.' Now, I've got a little boy at home. He will be five years old next month, and I propose to make something out of him, and I will start as soon as I can find out what he inclines to. If he is inclined to the law, I will have him read law with the best firm in the country, after I have fitted him for it. If he wants to be a merchant, Marshall Field and John Wannamaker will be infants to him. If he wants to be a gambler, he shall have a game of his own, and if he wants to be a preacher, he shall be a d—m sight the best one this country ever saw."

The student winced and started for the door, when the horse trader called him back and started in again:

"You see," said he, "the whole secret of this thing is in a fellow following the thing he is best fitted for. Now, as a case in point, I ran across a fellow in the last town I stopped at that had a new scheme, and I think it was the slickest thing I ever saw. Anyway, it was so slick that I bought it and here it is."

With this he took from his pocket three little shells and a small ball, about the size of a pea. He put them down on a small table, the three shells in a row, and he put the ball under one of them.

"Now," said he, "this thing, I understand, is entirely new, and, I think, the slickest thing I ever saw or heard of."

"Where does the slick part come in?" said the student, getting interested for the first time. "I am sure I cannot see anything very slick or strong about those little shells."

"The strange thing about the whole arrangement," said the horse trader, "is the little ball. Now, you fellows think you know where that little ball is, don't you? And I will just bet you a dollar that you don't."

"Of course," said the student, "I do know where it is, for I saw where you put it, but it is against my principles to bet, and besides that, I would not care to take your money."

The horse trader said, "Oh, you are not wiling to take an unfair advantage of me. Now, don't let that trouble you. I make my money easy, and if I lose what I have with me I have more at home."

The student—"That is not all the reason I have for not betting. I am studying for the ministry, and as a professed christian and a student of theology it would not be right for me to bet."

The trader—"That is all right, my boy, but didn't you tell us a little while ago that you were on a vacation? Now, my business is buying and selling horses and when I go on a vacation I just drop my

business and go in for a good time. I have been known to attend church services during my vacation, but never at any other time. I don't want to induce you to do what you should not do as a minister, but as you are on your vacation and there is no one here but us three, just you do a little brain work in this direction and see if you can guess where the little ball is."

The student—"I will not bet, but I will give you a dollar if I don't tell you the first time where that ball is."

The trader—"All right, my boy, go ahead, and if you do tell where it is I will give you a dollar."

The student pointed to the center shell. The trader picked it up and under it, sure enough, was the little ball. Again the trader fixed them and they decided the forfeit this time should be five dollars. The student was very much interested, and, seeming to forget that he was studying for the ministry, he commenced to talk about raising the bet. It was but a short time before the trader had lost over two hundred dollars to the student, and then the latter said he would play no more, because he did not care to take money from so nice a man. The student then said that the game was all right, but that he had a very quick eye and that there was not another man in the country that could do what he did. I knew

that he had no quicker eye than I had and I told him so. I furthermore said that I knew where the ball was every time.

With this, the trader spoke up and said that he did not believe there was another man in the country that could do him that way. He seemed a little put out at losing so much money, and he threw out a remark about my thinking I was so awful smart, and also that he would give me a chance to prove my smartness. With this he took out a roll of bills and counted out two hundred dollars. This he laid on the table and dared me to cover it. Of course, I did not have the money of my own, but it happened I had collected about $500 that morning from Zeb Green and two other men and had not deposited it as I intended to, owing to the fact of having these callers.

Feeling that I had a sure thing, I took the $500 from the safe, and counting out $200, covered the trader's money. Then the student got excited and said he would bet on the side of the trader, as he was sure no one had eyes as quick as his,so he counted out $200 and I covered that. I was holding the other hundred in my hand, and the trader said that if I wasn't a barefaced kid he would ask me to put up the other hundred. This made me mad and I planked down the other hundred and told him to go ahead with the game. He fixed the three little shells and

I saw as plain as day the little round bullet when it rolled under the left hand one. When he told me he was ready, I pointed to the shell. He took it up and I reached for the money.

"Hold on, my friend," said the student, "the ball is not there. I knew you had defective eyes."

Sure enough there was no ball under the left hand shell, and the trader and the student had my money. No, not my money, for it had just entered my head that the money did not belong to me, but to Mr. Dean, Betty's father. Can you imagine how I felt? Great heavens! I hope never to feel that way again. I realized in a moment that I was a thief and a gambler, and my next thought was to get that money back at any cost. There was but one way to do it, for the love of money had even turned the head of the young minister. I must take it away from them by force. If I could get rid of the trader, I thought I could easily finish the sick looking student, if he should so far forget himself as to stand out. They both commenced to laugh at and joke me about my failing sight and asked me if I had any more money to bet; at the same time I felt that they were both about to leave me. I soon saw a chance, and doubling up my good left fist, I landed one on the trader's chin that sent him to earth in a hurry. I then turned on the student and said:

"That money did not belong to me and you must give it up at once, or it will go hard with you, for I am desperate."

"Not so fast, my young lamb," said the student, as he drew from his hip pocket a nasty looking revolver, "not so fast. Just you sit down in that chair," and he pointed the gun at my head.

Of course, I was surprised at the turn things had taken, but I would rather face a dozen guns than to face Betty and her father, and own that I was a thief. With a quick upward movement of my right hand I sent the gun flying through space, and at the same time struck out with my left. The student ducked and clinched me, and for the next five minutes there was the liveliest thrashing about that office you ever heard of. Two or three times I thought I was a goner, but finally, gathering all of my reserved force, I landed my man on his back, and, sitting on his chest, looked about me for the trader. I must have hit him pretty hard, for he was just coming to, and was then getting on to his feet. I had barely recovered my breath enough to make another aggressive move and was wondering what I would do with both of them, when the door opened and Mike O'Brien stepped into the office.

"Mike," I yelled, "shut that door and lock it, and

take care of that man. They are trying to rob the office."

The trader did not seem to pay much attention to Mike and was hunting for something in his clothes. Just then Mike, picking up the student's revolver, said: "Perhaps this is what you are looking for."

I soon got my wind and we tied the two fellows hand and foot. Then I told Mike my experience, and he laughed as though it were a good joke. We searched the men; took all the money and weapons away from them, and gave them the choice between leaving the place and never showing up again, or being handed over to the town authorities. They decided that as all the money they had with them was counterfeit, they had better skip.

The student remarked as we parted that I was the hardest proposition he ever tackled, and I was obliged to own that for a sickly student, he was a little beyond my expectations.

LETTER NUMBER NINETEEN.

Coldeck, Nebraska.

My experience with the three shell men, as Mike O'Brien calls them, where I lost $500 of my employer's money, and then took it away from them with Mike's help, ought to teach me a good lesson, but Mike says, will it?—that's the question. I am sure that the lesson has done me lots of good, and I hope it was not altogether lost on the three shell men themselves. Mike says, however, that those men have skinned someone else before this time, and that the next thing I know some smart Aleck will come along and sell me a gold brick. Well, I guess not. In the first place bricks are not made of gold, and I don't know what call I would have to buy bricks anyway. Mike is a good fellow with all of his jokes, and he is my friend. He made me wear a sprig of shamrock on St. Patrick's Day, for he said if I wasn't an Irishman, I was a good fighter and ought to be one anyway.

I was a good deal worked up over my experience while Mr. Dean and Betty were away, and at first I hardly knew what to do about telling Mr. Dean of it. Mike was the only one who knew anything about it,

and he said I would be a fool if I told on myself. I thought differently, however, and as soon as I could get hold of Mr. Dean after his return, I told him that I wanted to quit my job. He was surprised, but when he found I was in earnest, he paid me off. Then it was that I told him the whole story, even to every little detail. After I had finished my story, I said to him: "Now, Mr. Dean, I have two requests to make; first, don't tell Betty a word about this; and next, you just turn in and kick me good. I deserve it, and I think I would feel better if you would do it." Say, but he did worse than that, for he just burst out laughing and laughed until I thought he would have a fit. When he was through laughing, he said:

"Tom, you are a brick. I always knew you were a good one and as brave as they make them, but when you come to me like a man and tell of your shortcomings, you make me think more of you than ever. These fellows taught you a good lesson, and I am sure you will profit by it, but you must not leave my employ—not yet, at all events. When you came here I did not need you, but I gave you a show and you made a place for yourself; now you must stay here and fill it, but I would like to have seen that 'mill,' although it has been many a year since I thought I could enjoy a thing of that kind." "But," said I, "it was not at the mill, but right here in your own office."

And with this he laughed again, as he said: "Tom, you would beat Josiah Allen's wife." "No, Mr. Dean," said I, "I wouldn't beat any woman, but I wouldn't mind another trial with that student." With this he burst out anew with his laughter and rushed out of the office. I never saw Mr. Dean act that way before, and it struck me that they must have had a fine time down to the association meeting at Omaha.

When I went up to the house to supper that night Betty and Mrs. Dean both wanted to know how my clothes got torn so badly, for they had found some of the things that I had worn when I had taken that lesson from the student. I had entirely forgotten them, and I was wondering what I would say when Mr. Dean came to my relief and said: "Mother," he always calls Mrs. Dean "mother," "did you ever hear of a young man fighting the tiger?" "Yes," said Mrs. Dean slowly, "it does seem as though I had heard that expression, but somehow it doesn't seem to me that it means a real tiger." "Well," said Mr. Dean with a laugh, "it was a real tiger that Tom tackled, and he whipped him, too; and that is more than most young men do, so don't say any more about the clothes. Just fix them up if they are not past fixing, and throw them away if they are. Tom is all right, and has told it all to me; so don't bother him any more about it."

That was the last any of them said about it. About a week after this Mike asked me if they had ever found out about my scrape. "Yes," said I. "I told Mr. Dean all about it." "And didn't he fire you?" "No," said I, "he raised my pay ten dollars a month and said he wanted me to stay right along." At this Mike gave a long whistle, and he seemed awfully surprised as he said: "Tom, you would fall in the sewer and come out covered with diamonds." "But, Mike, there aren't any sewers in this town." "No," said he, "and that is most likely the reason you don't fall in; you have fallen into everything else." I like Mike, but I don't just understand what he means about my falling into things.

Soon after I came to this town, there was a young man who came here with the firm that put up the grain elevator. I guess I never told you about him. He is a fine looking fellow, a carpenter by trade, and his name is Walter Crandall. He learned his trade back East somewhere, and has worked in Chicago, Omaha, and several other large cities. He is about twenty-seven years old, and unmarried. The reason I am telling all about him is because we are getting to be such good friends that I thought you would be interested in him. When the grain elevator was finished I expected he would go back to Omaha, but he told me he believed that the place for a young man

was not in the large city, but in some small town, and as he liked the people of Coldeck, he had decided to stay here and open a shop. He allowed that if he could not get work enough at his trade, he could farm a little and come out ahead of the fellow who stayed in the city and tried to fight strikes and combinations. He told me lots about the strikes, but somehow I don't quite understand them; neither do I understand the labor unions, as he calls them. He says that the men band themselves together and tell the owners and contractors whom they shall hire; how long the men shall work, and how much pay they shall receive. Walter seems to be a nice, honest man, but that thing is so out of reason that I cannot understand it. Suppose, for instance, that the four clerks down at Johnston's store should lay down the law as to what pay they should get and how many hours they should work; what do you suppose old man Johnston would do? Do! why he would swear and stamp his feet, and he would send those clerks a-flying in short order; and as soon as the people found it out, there would be seven hundred young men, besides a few young ladies and girls, there after those places. Oh, no, Walter must be wrong about those labor unions; it doesn't stand to reason.

That is not exactly what I started to write about Walter, though; but that labor union business has

puzzled me some. It was in January, I think, that Walter came to me one day and asked if I would not introduce him to Miss Betty. I was glad to do this after I found out why he had requested it. He said Miss Betty reminded him so much of a sister of his who died several years ago. There is one thing sure —his sister could not have looked much like him; for he is light, with brown hair and blue eyes, while Miss Betty is more inclined towards a brunette. While we were talking of her, Miss Betty walked into the office, and I introduced them. I don't think I ever saw a young man so pleased before, and you ought to have heard him talk. If she spoke of a book he had read it and could tell all about the different characters. If she spoke of a fine piece of statuary, he had seen it and could tell the name of the sculptor. If she spoke of a city of the East, he had been there and could tell her of the peculiarities of the people. It was a stormy day and no one else came in; and for an hour those two people sat there and exchanged thoughts, and I pretended to be at work on my books, but I often caught myself standing watching them with my mouth open and my whole attention absorbed by their words, which I realized were more or less beyond my powers of comprehension.

After the first meeting Walter and Miss Betty met several times during the winter, and every time they seemed to get so interested in each other that they

forgot the flight of time. It seems strange to me that a man would be so interested in a young lady just because she reminded him of a dead sister. What puzzles me, though, is how it is that Miss Betty is so interested. He certainly cannot remind her of her brother, for they don't look a bit alike. Mike says that I had best look to my laurels, but Mike is so suspicious. It doesn't stand to reason that a man would marry a girl because she reminded him of his sister. The most of them prefer a girl who looks like some other fellow's sister. To be on the right side, however, I had a long talk with Miss Betty, and I guess I set her to thinking. I commenced by saying:

"Miss Betty, I have a strange, restless longing this spring."

"Almost every one does at this time of year, Tom. You should take some spring tonic." This proved to me that I had started wrong, so I commenced again:

"Please don't interrupt me, Miss Betty; and after I have explained you will have a better idea of what I mean. I see that you enjoy to talk with a man who can talk books, and I propose to read. I know that you admire men who have made their mark in the world, and I shall make my mark. All I ask of you is to tell me what I must accomplish before I can sue for your hand; and I can assure you that no task will be so great but that I will accomplish it. All I

ask is that my reward will be yourself—to me the most precious and the most beautiful of women. For you I would scale the heights of—"

"Hold on, Tom. Get me the book so that I may see if you are saying that right. I think you mispronounced some of those words. Did you take that from 'Blood and Thunder Joe' or from 'Pink-Eyed Nellie, the Pride of North Gulch?' " and as sure as preaching she reached for the very book I learned it out of.

"Well," said I, as I took the book from her, "the sentiment is mine, if the words are borrowed."

"All right, Tom. When you own a pair of horses without a blemish, the finest carriage in the town, and money enough to keep them for a year, you can come and ask me to go to ride," and with that she bounded out of the room. I wanted to take her in my arms and kiss her to bind the bargain, but I am so rough that I might have hurt the dear little thing, and I am glad I overcame the desire to do so.

After she left me I had a good long think. I have already a couple of hundred dollars saved up, and with my knowledge of horses, if I don't do some tall work soon! You just wait! I am satisfied of one thing: If she had not been inclined my way, she would not have set me so easy a task. Of course she hasn't really promised me anything yet, but I know girls. Just keep close tab on my next month's work.

LETTER NUMBER TWENTY.

Coldeck, Nebraska.

If you are a horseman you will appreciate some of the pleasure that I have had in the anticipation of what I was to do; and if you are a real truly practical horseman you have most likely met with some of the surprises that are always in store for the fellow who puts his trust in his judgment in the matter of horses. I have always claimed that I was a born horseman, and I have not only claimed it, but I have proved it by what I have done in this line. However, I am not going back into past history, but I propose to tell you of some history that I have been making during the past month.

I wrote you in my last what Betty said about the necessity of my having a pair of horses without a blemish, etc. Well, of course that little talk showed me where I stood with her, and I made up my mind that the time would be short between then and the time I should be able to ride behind a pair of the best the country afforded. The fact that I lacked the greater part of the price did not bother me in the least; in fact, it gave me more chance to show what

I could do for the girl I loved. I took an inventory of my belongings, and found I had a little over two hundred dollars, all in the hands of my employer, and I knew that I could have this at any time for the asking. As Mr. Dean is something of a lover of horses, I had no hesitancy in telling him that I had decided to buy me a team, but I gave him to understand that my only reason for getting it was that I loved horses. He very kindly told me that I could drive Jake whenever I liked, which was very nice of my future father-in-law, but old Jake would not fill the bill.

Speaking of Mr. Dean as a father-in-law, I am wondering if he will feel proud of me when I become a member of his family in good earnest. But I must not go to day-dreaming; I must write history, for I feel that I am a maker of history as far as the Dean family and horse flesh in Coldeck is concerned. My first venture in horse flesh was in buying a little sorrel mare. I paid thirty-five dollars for her, and she could pace to beat time—so the man said of whom I bought her. I bought me a road-cart for ten dollars, and a harness for eight, so that my whole rig cost me fifty-three dollars. The horse was poor, but she was full of life, and I worked over her to get her to look a little better, but it was not of much use. She was a hard looking proposition. The only thing she had in

her favor was her speed, which was good for Coldeck.

Saturday afternoon I drove her down toward the duck pond, where all the boys go to speed their horses. They all laughed when I drove up, and Sam Smalley asked me why I didn't get out and walk and give the horse a chance. I did not say anything, but just bided my time until Smalley and Bill Little got to speeding their blooded stock, and then I cut in and beat them both for a quarter-mile stretch. Smalley offered to bet me that I could not do it again, but when I pulled a hundred-dollar bill on him, he backed down. You see the horse was not known in Coldeck, for I had bought him of a peddler who was passing through the town, because he was not heavy enough for his work. It hurt Smalley's feelings pretty bad to be beaten by a horse he had been making fun of, and as I saw there was no bet in the man, I bantered him to bet me five hundred dollars that I could not beat him in a straight mile heat, and offered to make it the best three in five and raise it two hundred more if he wanted to. Betting was **no go** with him, however, which I well knew, or I would not have offered to bet.

When I got home that night I got the best looking thin blanket I could find in the barn and dressed up the little mare. You see, I was expecting company, and, sure enough, they came, Sam Smalley and his cousin, Jeff Brown. Jeff thinks he knows all about

horses, and Sam knows he does, and I knew that that kind of a pair was just the kind to sell a horse to, so I laid my plans accordingly. As they came in, Jeff commenced the conversation by saying: "Say, Tom, where is that wonderful pacer Sam has been telling me about?"

"Oh, she is in the barn," said I. "She's nothing so wonderful as I know of, but she isn't taking any Coldeck dust, for she doesn't have to. I suppose you and Sam came around to close that bet I offered, so if you have the money with you, we will go right into the house and fix it up. You can raise it all you want to if you will take Mr. Dean's check, for I don't think I could raise more than seven hundred dollars cash."

"Say, Tom," said Jeff, ignoring what I said, "where did you get that animal, anyway?"

"I got her of a friend of mine who had to have some money. I let him have a hundred dollars on her, and he expects to get her back in a month and pay me twenty-five for the use of my money, but he is an improvident cuss, and it is dollars to sausages that he will want me to keep her two months for the same price. You bet, I won't do it, though, for there is a man from Skimptown looking at her right now." You see, I had to talk big, and I was sure that all the successful horse traders that I had ever seen were great liars. They don't seem to lie so much about

the horse they are trying to sell as they do about other things connected with it.

"Say," said Jeff, "I will give you a hundred and twenty-five dollars, and we will close the deal right now."

"No," said I; "I am sure of that from Jim Green, of Skimptown, and I have given him my word that I would hold her or get more."

After awhile, however, we closed the deal for $137.50 cash, and a navy revolver. Jeff said the revolver was worth twenty-five dollars, and I believed him until I noticed him winking at Sam, and then I knew that they were trying to cheat me. After all, I did pretty fair, and came out $83.50 to the good, for Mr. Dean would not take any pay for the mare's keep.

Betty Dean saw me driving the sorrel mare, and one day she asked me what it was. I told her it was the first brick in the foundation of my happiness. She looked puzzled for a moment, and then said she thought I would have more happiness if I had one brick less of that kind. I took her clean off her feet, though, the next morning after the sale when she asked me how my brick was, and I just poured $137.50 in gold and silver into her lap.

"Miss Betty," said I, "those bricks sell for just $137.50 apiece. What do you think of them now as a

foundation of happiness?" I gathered up my money and walked out, and I don't think Betty recovered for an hour.

It was all over town the next day that I had sold a fast pacer to Jeff Brown, and of course I was considered quite a horseman, of which record I was proud you may be sure.

About this time I felt that life was something worth while, especially as I had set my aim high, and had taken some steps in the right direction. However, I was without a horse, and with that fact staring me in the face, I realized that there was but little chance of winning my bride. One afternoon a farmer drove in with one of the handsomest horses I ever saw. He was as black as coal, carried his head up, and every part about him seemed perfect. I asked Mr. Davenport (the farmer) if he wanted to sell the horse. "No," said the farmer, "I just bought him of a fellow down below here, and I was thinking that if I could get a mate to him, I would have the finest team in the country, and one without a blemish." I looked up quickly when he said this, for it sounded strangely familiar, but he was flecking a bit of dirt off the harness with his whip, and did not even look up, so I knew it was a coincidence. Mr. Davenport was leading a poor looking specimen of a horse behind his wagon, which he offered to sell me for twenty-five dollars, but I told

him that was not the horse that won my heart. After a good bit of dickering, I bought the black horse for one hundred and fifty dollars cash, and perhaps I did not feel like a ten times' winner when I realized that that coal black nag was all my own. I wondered where Betty was, and also wondered if she would call this one a poor brick.

After supper that night I was revolving in my mind the surprise I had in store for Miss Betty, when she broke out with:

"Say, Tom, you are a pretty good judge of horses, aren't you?"

"Well," said I; "I think I am, Miss Betty. You made a good deal of fun of the last one I had, but perhaps there may be some surprise in store for you yet. But," I added, "why do you ask the question?"

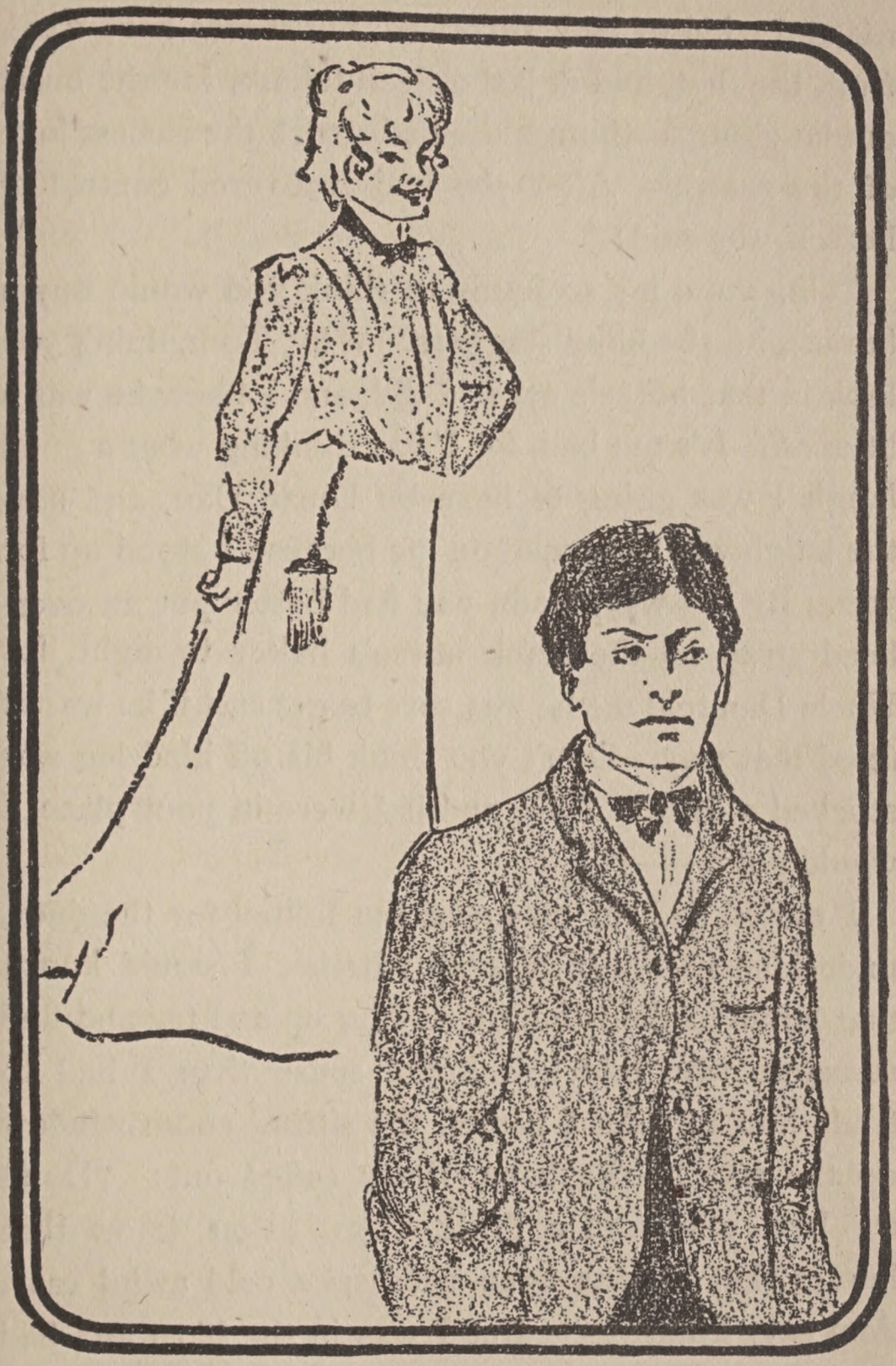
"Oh, nothing particular, only I met Uncle Dan Davenport this afternoon when I was out driving, and I learned something about horses. Uncle Dan had a handsome black horse that he was leading behind his wagon, and I asked him why he did not harness the black one and put on more style than with the one he had. While we were talking the black horse began to pull back, and then run up, and then go sideways, first one way and then the other, and Uncle Dan told me that the pretty black horse had the blind staggers, and that he did not dare to drive him for

fear he would fall down and break the shafts. I asked him what he bought a horse like that for, and he said he had bought it on speculation; that he only gave twenty-five dollars for it, and that he would sell it to some fellow who had more money than horse sense. I told him about your wanting to buy a team without a blemish, and he said that he guessed he would harness the black into the shafts and go up and try you. I told him that he did not need to try you, for you had told me that you knew all about horses, and the result of our talk was that he bet me two pounds of chocolates against a pair of driving gloves that he could sell you that horse at a good figure. Say, Tom, did I win?"

Mr. Editor, what do you think of that for luck? Did she win? Well, if she didn't the other fellow did, hands down. When Miss Betty commenced to tell that story, I was in high glee, but as she went on with it I would have been pleased if the floor had opened and swallowed me up. The surprise had come, but it was mine.

"What's the matter, Tom? You are looking pale. Are you sick?"

"No, Miss Betty. I am not sick exactly, but I will pay for those driving gloves." I don't know why I should have looked pale, for the perspiration was coming out of every pore of my body. Betty looked at



"Don't let him stand in a draft, Tom."

me and tried to look surprised, but it was hard work from the first, and at last a dead failure, for she burst out laughing as though she had struck the richest joke of the season. After she had recovered control of herself, she said:

"Oh, Tom, it's so funny to think you would buy a horse with the blind staggers. Why, Tom, didn't you look in that horse's eye? I did, and I knew he was a little off. It's too bad, for I was thinking what a good laugh I was going to have on Uncle Dan, and now the laugh will be turned on me because I stood up for you. By the way, Tom, you had better put an overhead strap on the black horse's halter to-night, for Uncle Dan told me he was sure to get cast if he wasn't fixed that way. Don't you think his off hind leg was stocked a little? I do, and if I were in your place, I would put a——"

I waited to hear no more, but bolted for the door, undecided in my own mind whether I would knock that horse in the head, or fix him up and try and find someone who had less horse sense than I had to trade him to. As I passed the sitting room window on the way to the barn, Betty called out: "Don't let him stand in a draft, Tom. You know that horses that haven't been used take cold awful easy. And say, Tom——" But I was in the barn and had the door shut, for I argued that if the draft was

as bad on that horse as that girl's conversation was on me, he should have full protection. I stayed in the barn until I was sure the family were all in bed; then crept into my room, and as I could not sleep, have written this letter to you. I am not sure just at present which I shall dread the most of the trials that the morning will bring, facing the horse with the blind staggers, or the girl who lost her bet.

LETTER NUMBER TWENTY-ONE.

Coldeck, Nebraska.

When I was back in Illinois, at Hardacre Corners, I learned something about horses; some of the things were told to me and some I learned by experience. Those that I learned by experience I have never forgotten, but most of the things that were told me only went to confirm my experience after I had been bitten.

I had been told all about horses with the blind staggers; how to handle them and how to tell if they were liable to have them. I had been told the cause and also the remedy, but I did not take much notice of all this talk, for I never expected to own a horse of that kind. When I did get caught, however, I began to think of what I had been told.

How well I remember that night, one month ago when I wrote you my last letter. When I had finished writing, it was three o'clock in the morning and I was as wide awake as though I had just gotten up from a ten-hour sleep. I sat down on the edge of the bed and began to talk to myself something after this style: "Tom Clingstone, you have been making an ass of

yourself again. Here you are, dead in love with the sweetest girl in the whole West, and you have made a fool of yourself buying a horse with the blind staggers; and the worst of it is, that girl that you think more of than you do of your own life, knows all about it; in fact she came very near putting the job up on you. Now, you must get out of this scrape somehow and save your reputation as a horseman and win back the good opinion of the girl."

Now there was old Joel Schoolcraft back home; I have heard him tell that if a horse had the blind staggers, the only way was to bleed him. But then, old Joel never did do anything very brilliant, and I made up my mind that although I might be obliged to bleed the horse as a temporary relief to him, the only permanent relief to me would be to bleed some other fellow. As soon as this idea got through my head, I began to devise means of doing this same thing. I did not want to dispose of him in the town and I knew if I happened to drive into a section of the country where he was known, it would be all up with me, so I tried an old trick that I once helped a liveryman at home to do. I will not explain just how I did it as it might cause someone to be dishonest, but at five o'clock on the same morning that I wrote to you, I was driving out of the stable with a black horse that had the prettiest white star on his forehead that you

ever saw; he also had a narrow streak of white on his breast, which did credit to the artist.

Now, if you know anything about blind staggers, you know that a horse is more liable to be troubled with them in the afternoon than in the morning, as in the morning, after a good night's rest, his blood is cool and there is less liability of a rush of blood to the head. I left a note telling Mr. Dean that I had business down in Skimptown, ten miles below Coldeck. It was about nine o'clock when I arrived at Skimptown; I took plenty of time, as I was bound that my horse should be in good condition when I got there. I drove at once to Jim Stevens' stable and asked him if he knew where I could buy a good team of road horses. I described to him what I wanted, and all the time I was talking to him he was looking over the black horse. The black was feeling fine and did not seem to want to stand still—it might be that a little prodding I did occasionally had something to do with it.

Every little while Jim would ask me a question. First, he asked me what time I left Coldeck, and I told him it was a little before eight o'clock. It was a little before eight o'clock; in fact it was about three hours before, but three hours isn't much if a fellow has only three hours to live. After awhile he asked me where I got him, and I told him that a brother of

mine raised him, which was a fact, as all men are brothers. All of this time I was talking about the horses I wanted to buy. At last an idea seemed to strike him; he said he knew a farmer down the road a piece that he thought had about the team I wanted, and if I wanted him to, he would ride down with me and see them. He got into the cart with me and we weren't over a minute and a half going that quarter of a mile. When we got to the farmer's place, we found just what I expected, that the farmer had nothing to sell but a pair of farm chunks, which of course I did not want. I was disgusted of course, and walked the horse back to Jim's stable. I talked all the time about the horses I wanted, and Jim only half listened, as he was all eyes for the black horse. At last he said, "How much did you say your brother wanted for this horse?"

"My brother doesn't own this horse: I own him and he isn't for sale unless I can get my price, for the people about these parts don't know a good horse when they see it."

"Well," said Jim,"there might be some people about here that know a little something about a horse. How much do you want for him?"

"Four hundred cash," said I, "and not a cent less."

"Oh, that doesn't scare me," said Jim. "I have one that I would not take five hundred dollars for;

but he is better bred than this one. I will bring him out and stand them side by side, and if they come together as I think they may, I will give you more than four hundred for him."

Jim brought his horse out and stood him beside mine. Say, but it was a marvel how near I had copied that star and stripe. Jim tried not to show how well he was pleased. I pulled out a ten-dollar bill and asked him how much he would give or take.

"Oh, no," said Jim, "you don't catch me that way; but I will make you a proposition." And he brought out a little sorrel mare which he said was worth a hundred and fifty of any man's money. "She is a peach," said Jim.

I could see that she had splints before and spavins behind, but she did not go lame. She had a good seven-year-old mouth, but it wasn't the first one she had had. Jim insisted that I have my horse taken out and fed and that I try the sorrel mare; in fact, he set his man at work to do that same thing. I drove her up and down in front of the stable a few times and told Jim all of the good points I saw in her, and then told Jim I thought he set too big a price on her.

"All right," said Jim, "perhaps I do, but as the mare seems to suit you, just say how you will trade."

"I will trade her for just three hundred and no less."

Jim certainly is a mind reader, for before I had the

words hardly out of my mouth, the money was in my hands. There were six fifty-dollar bills, nice and crisp, and Jim slapped me on the back and said, "Jim Stevens is quick on a trade if anyone asks you, and when you get another horse that you are willing to trade, come and see me and I will give you the rest of the band." At this the stableman commenced to laugh, and I drove off toward Coldeck.

I was willing to be thought a jay, to get out of the scrape I was in and I knew that Jim Stevens and all of his men thought I was a jay, but after I got out of that town I just laughed and hollered until I was hoarse. Then I got to wondering what Jim meant by giving me the rest of the band. I was anxious to get back to Coldeck; I had figured that I would get there long before noon and put up my horse at the yard and then walk up to the house as though nothing had happened, but I found I was to gain a little more experience before I got there. I was urging the little sorrel along the best I could, when all at once she began to whistle. Then I dropped on to what Jim meant by giving me the rest of the band. The sorrel mare was a whistler, and Jim was most likely laughing over the fact of having taken me in on a broken-winded mare. I drove very slow the rest of the way to Coldeck, and arrived at the lumber yard just as Mr. Dean was going to dinner. He seemed to notice

the fact that I had a poor, broken-down horse, and I could see a twinkle in his eye as he proposed to get in and ride up to the house with me. Arriving at the house, who should we find, but Betty's uncle, Mr. Davenport. Betty was there also, and I could see them looking at the sorrel mare and exchanging glances which meant something, but what, I did not know.

I was feeling good and did my share of talking while we were at the dinner table. After dinner Miss Betty and Mr. Davenport followed me out on to the porch, and "Uncle Dan," as the Deans all call him, said: "Tom, I did not intend to keep that hundred and fifty dollars you gave me for the black horse. I only tried that trick on you at Betty's suggestion, and I am ready to return the money if you will produce the horse, or if you will tell me how much you lost on him, I will make your loss good."

I could see out of the side of my eye that Betty was watching me as she never watched me before; what the whole thing meant I did not know, but I felt as though I had the best of the deal so far. I folded my arms, and, looking Mr. Davenport square in the eye, said: "Mr. Davenport, do you take me for a baby? I bought the horse from you fair and square, and if I had lost every dollar I had on him, I would never allow you to make it good. As it is, however, I am

ahead of the game, and I am very much obliged to you for putting me on to a good thing."

"A good thing," said Mr. Davenport, "what do you mean, Tom? Who did you sell the horse to?"

"I sold him to Jim Stevens, the liveryman, down at Skimptown."

"Oh, no, Tom, that can't be," said Mr. Davenport. "Why, Jim Stevens owned that black horse once; in fact he sold him to the man I bought him of, and induced the man to give a hundred dollars for him, and he was a poor man, too, and couldn't afford to be taken in that way."

"What you say is no doubt true, Mr. Davenport, but Jim Stevens bought that black horse of me and gave me three hundred dollars and the music box I drove home. I might add, however, that Jim did not know the horse, as the black horse had changed a portion of his black coat during the night; in fact he had grown some marks that very closely resembled the marks on a valuable horse Jim owns and which he has been trying to mate for a long time." At this I took out the six fifty-dollar bills and handing them toward Mr. Davenport, said, "There doesn't seem to be any blind staggers about those, does there?"

Mr. Dean had been an attentive listener to all that was said, and started to say something when Miss Betty chimed in with, "Tom, I got a scolding on your

account to-day. Father says I have turned your head on this horse business and that you are neglecting your work. Now, I have a request to make; will you grant it?"

"Of course I will, Miss Betty. All you have to do is to ask it."

"All right, Tom, I want you to deliver that horse, harness and cart to Uncle Dan and let him sell it for you for what he can get, and then I want you to let the horse business alone. Do you promise?"

"But, Miss Betty—"

"No, there is no 'Miss Betty' about it. Do you propose to keep your promise?"

"Of course I will; but it seems as though you were taking an unfair advantage of me."

I caught Betty's eye and the look she gave me showed that I had gone far enough. I went out and got the sorrel mare and cart and was not at all sorry when I saw Mr. Davenport drive her down the road. Mr. Dean had gone back to the lumber office and Betty and I were left alone on the porch.

"Can I speak now, Miss Betty?"

"No, Tom, you cannot say a word. I want to speak now; I want to tell you that I am sorry that I have been so thoughtless, and that I have made you so much trouble. Now, don't speak, Tom, I am not done yet. I am not going to ask you to forgive me

for I just enjoyed every bit of it, and I have laughed over your being taken in on that black horse until I cried. And, Tom, I was proud of you when you told Uncle Dan that you would stand by your trade if you lost every dollar you had. I knew you would, Tom, and it sometimes takes more courage to do that, than it does to stop a runaway."

"Can't I say something now, Miss Betty?"

"No, Tom, not a word. You have work to do down at the lumber yard. Father needs you; just go back there and let him know that you have not forgotten your duty to your employer." With this she turned and left me and there was nothing for me to do but to go back to the lumber yard.

When six o'clock came I had my books all posted and had waited on several customers. Mr. Dean had not spoken to me all the afternoon, and it suited me just as well that he did not. I wanted to show him that my experience with horses had not hurt me, and I guess I did, for as we walked home together, he commenced to talk of my horse experience and finally said that I was too good a man to waste my time with horses. He said I might do well in the horse business, but that it was a cheap business at best when followed for a living, particularly if I proposed to make a living trading. Then he explained to me the difference between a legitimate horse dealer and a

trader, and it struck me that possibly I had had a narrow escape, for I could see by the way he talked that he would want something different than a horse trader for a son-in-law.

I hardly know what to make of Miss Betty. If she cares anything about me, she has a successful way of covering it; but whether she cares anything for me or not, she has the art of keeping me guessing down as fine as silk.

LETTER NUMBER TWENTY-TWO.

Coldeck, Nebraska.

The glorious Fourth has come and gone and some of us are still here with all of our arms and legs. I have had several serious talks with Betty since I last wrote you, and do you know, Mr. Editor, I have an idea that if she would consent or decide to marry me, she might make quite a man of me. This may be a strange confession to make, but somehow I cannot help but make it. Now there are the first two lines of this letter; they are Betty's words. I never would have thought of the Fourth of July that way, and say, when she asked me why people bought fireworks and burned powder on the Fourth of July, I had to think a spell before I could answer her. Betty is a right smart girl, and she says that where there is one ounce of powder burned from purely patriotic motives, there are a hundred pounds burned by people who only recognize the glorious Fourth as a day on which the restraining hand of the law is removed in order to give them a chance to raise Cain.

I worked pretty hard through the month of June, after Betty made me promise not to have anything

more to do with horse trading, but I did not get any chance to talk with her. I did not grumble, for although I was anxious to know her feelings toward me, I felt that I was not losing anything by waiting, particularly as I was sticking close to business and standing first-class with Mr. Dean. I have heard that it is a good thing to stand in with the parents of the only girl on earth, but if a fellow stood in with the whole town it would make no difference if the girl had as much of a head of her own as is the case with Miss Betty Dean. But I started to tell you of our Fourth of July talk and a little experience I had on that day. On the evening of the third of July, I asked Betty if she did not think that the Fourth of July would be a good time to let me do a little talking, and I also asked her if she would go with me to the picnic in the afternoon. To both of these questions she said yes, but just as I was feeling as though things were coming my way, Miss Betty told me that she would reserve the right to name the subjects upon which I should talk. That girl can dash a man's hopes with more ease than anyone I ever heard of, but I made up my mind that as she had given me a little chance, I would put my wits against hers and see if I couldn't come out ahead. In the first place she told me not to spend a cent for fireworks; in this I minded her, but after breakfast on the morning of

the Fourth as we were sitting alone on the front porch, I made up my mind that I would break the rule of asking her what I should talk about.

"Miss Betty," said I, "did it ever occur to you that I am not a child and that I have feeling the same as other people?"

"Why, Tom, what does all this mean?"

I saw that I had surprised her and that I had her for the moment at a disadvantage, and I made up my mind that I would follow up my advantage.

"It means," said I, "that I am going to say a few things to you whether you like it or not, and whether or not you give me permission to do so."

"Stop, Tom, if you say anything more in that strain, I will not go to the picnic with you."

"All right, Miss Betty, I don't care a hang whether you go to the picnic with me or not, but this you have got to know, and know right now, I love you with all my mind, might and strength, and now that you know it I don't care who else knows it. More than this I want to marry you, and I want you to tell me right now whether you will or not."

You see I got started and couldn't stop. When we started to talk we were both sitting down, but in my excitement I had gotten up and when I spoke of marriage Betty stood up and looked me square in the eye until I stopped talking. Say, but there was a

chill in the atmosphere as she stood there looking at me after I had finished talking. I could think of nothing else but that she reminded me of a cucumber that had been on ice all night. I seemed to partake something of the chill, for I stopped talking and, figuratively speaking, pawed the air, striving to get started again, but it was of no use—words would not come. Miss Betty had better luck, for she pointed to one of the chairs and said, "Tom, sit down," and down I sat. Miss Betty took the other chair and said:

"Tom, I am sorry that you have obliged me to talk to you on this subject, but I propose to hold a looking-glass up to you and when I am done I am going to ask you if you don't think you should ask my pardon for talking to me as you have this morning. We will pass lightly over the fact that there are several other young ladies whom you have talked to as strongly as you have to me, and also one lady who was not so young and who you talked even stronger to. But to come down to facts that more closely concern us both right now. You know I was born in the lap of luxury, so far as a country girl can be, that I have a perfectly lovely home and a father and mother who are willing and able to do anything for me that I ask. Now you ask me to change all this for what? Would I better my condition by accepting your offer? Would I help you by marrying you and

going to live with you on your salary? Perhaps you think my father would support me as he always has, after I was your wife—no, you are too noble a man to have ever thought a thing of that kind; I should not have said that. Tell me, Tom, have you really ever thought anything other than that you had an idea that you wanted to marry me? You do not answer; I thought you wouldn't, so I will tell you a little something of myself. I decided long ago, Tom, that I would never marry. I have a mission in life and that mission is to become a writer; I have already had some of my articles accepted, but it is hard, slow work. However, my path is before me, and look as far into the path as I can, there does not seem to be any husband in it. For that reason we will dismiss the husband part of it and I will tell you something of how I feel toward you. In the first place I appreciate the fact that you saved my life once, but I do not feel that I owe you anything on that account. You did not know me then and would have saved anyone else just as readily. You are a kind, generous, brave man and I think a great deal of you, and if you were my brother I would not think there was a girl in this or any other town who was good enough for you. But you are growing brighter and for fear I will get you to thinking too much of yourself, I will stop talking."

"Well, Miss Betty, you have held me up to myself in good shape, but I am not going to ask your pardon for anything I have said, for I not only meant every word of it, but I love you now more than ever. At the same time, I am not going to stand in the way of your literary pursuits, but will take a week off and think this thing over." I then asked her what time she would be ready to go to the picnic, and without hesitating a moment she said:

"I will be ready at two o'clock."

From that time, and it was about ten o'clock when she said this, until two o'clock I was long on "think," but I must say I was short on results. I was not exactly sure that I had been thrown over but I was quite sure that I had not been accepted. What it all meant I could not make out, but decided to watch for a chance in the afternoon and see if I could not get something more satisfactory. At two o'clock we started for the picnic grounds, which were a nice long walk from the house but hardly long enough with Betty for company. We talked of everything but ourselves, for I had made up my mind that there was no use in starting a nail unless I could drive it home, and I don't think I ever enjoyed myself as much as I did during that walk. But we were soon at the grounds, where we joined the crowd, and it was not long until some of the young men claimed the atten-

tion of Miss Dean. I did not lose sight of her, however, and about four o'clock managed to get near enough to her to invite her to go rowing with me on the river. She loves to row and I happened to know that she had refused one or two offers to go boating, which made me feel all the better when she accepted my invitation. I had a nice little boat staked out and soon we were gliding over the water. As we got into the boat, Miss Betty took the oars and motioned me to a seat in the stern, which I took with pleasure, for it gave me a chance to study her, and say, Mr. Editor, but she was a splendid study. I am not up on dresses that the girls wear, but as I remember her now, she reminded me of a pleasing dream—one of those fluffy kind where you have all the nice things you want to eat, and where you travel over the country without touching the ground. Now I come to think of it watching her was very much like a dream of eating.

Did you ever dream of eating all the nice things that you ever craved? Of course you have. Do you remember how they tasted? Of course you do, but it was not very satisfactory, was it? Well, my looking at Miss Betty when I realized that I had to be guarded with my tongue and keep my hands to myself, wasn't very satisfying either. I never saw Miss Betty when she was so talkative as she was as she toyed with

those oars, and you ought to have heard me trying to get a word in, in my own behalf. The worst of it was, she was talking of me most of the time. She told me how much her father thought of me; what a good salesman I was; how well I kept the books, and a hundred other things until I felt like a fool. You see it struck me that she was doing this for two reasons; first, so that I could have no excuse to tell her of my many good qualities, and second, that there would be no time for me to say anything. At last I got discouraged and began to wish that I could roll overboard and end my troubles by drowning. Just as I had closed my eyes to shut out the heavenly vision before me, I heard screams that seemed to come from every boat on the river and half of the people on the land. I jumped to my feet, forgetting about the little shell of a boat I was in, and before I could recover myself I was overboard. As I went under, I recalled the whole situation; I wondered what all the screaming was about, but the most I thought of was my awkward tumble out of the boat. I was sure I could never face Miss Betty again, and my thought then was not to save myself, but to swim to the bottom of the river, get hold of something and stay there until I was done for. Suiting the action to the thought, I struck out for the bottom of the river. Just at this time my hands encountered the folds of a child's

dress; I grabbed it and caught not the dress alone, but the child that was in it. The child grasped me around the neck and then came a struggle for life. We came to the surface and I breathed, but the child's grip was too fast and we went down again. With an almost superhuman effort, I partly unclasped one of the child's arms from about my neck and once more we reached surface. This time we came up near a flat boat filled with men and boys, and were hauled out; that is, I am told we were, but to tell the truth the last I knew was when we were making the effort to reach the surface the second time; the next I knew I was lying over a barrel suffering the tortures of the damned. After they decided that they had rolled me enough I was taken home and put to bed. I opened my eyes and told them as plain as I could without speaking to let me alone, and after awhile they concluded to do that very thing.

As I look at it now, it was a very funny situation. I had been the principal actor in a very stirring event, but what that event was, or who the other party in it was, I did not have the least idea. Somehow I felt that I was in disgrace, and I made up my mind that I would not speak again until I was strong enough to walk, and then I would leave that section of the country for good and ever. I had gotten quite com-

fortable when I heard Mrs. McLoud, Mr. Dean's sister, and Betty talking just outside my door.

"Where is the dear boy," said Mrs. McLoud, "I can never thank him enough for saving my little girl. I came just as soon as she was out of danger."

I could feel the color come into my face, but I forced myself to feign sleep. As soon as the ladies satisfied themselves that I was asleep and after Mrs. McLoud had kissed me half a dozen times, she turned to Miss Betty and said:

"Now, you must tell me just how it all happened. Others have told me, but I want to hear it from you. You were with the hero when he took his life in his hands and risked it to save my child."

"Well," said Miss Betty, "I presume you have heard it all, but I love to tell it, for it was the most splendid thing I ever saw or heard of. I was rowing and Tom and I were talking when all at once I heard everyone scream; I also saw Mamie as she fell from the boat into the river; we were in the swiftest of the current and below the boat she was in. My first thought was that I wished Tom was there, for I felt that he could save her; the next thing I realized was that the boat was rocking, and I looked just in time to see Tom leave the boat, making the most graceful dive you ever saw. The next we all knew he came to the surface with Mamie in his arms; he was exhausted, how-

ever, and sank again for a moment before he finally handed her to the men in Johnson's flat boat, and when they got him on board he fainted, but the doctor says he is all right now and that this sleep is the best thing in the world for him." With this they went out.

Now what do you think of that for luck? Wouldn't it just frost you? I lay there and played sleep all day and wrote this when the good people, who don't know what a big fraud I am, thought I was still sleeping. Won't I be a hero when I conclude to wake up? Well, I should just guess.

LETTER NUMBER TWENTY-THREE.

San Francisco.

They say that some people cannot stand prosperity, but I don't think that would apply to me. There are things that I can't stand, however, or one thing at least, and that is to be turned down by a girl whom I would be willing to give my life for. The morning after I wrote my last letter to you I was a hero in the eyes of everyone in the town. It is true I had done nothing to merit it, but the people did not know that, and if I had told them the truth, not one of them would have believed it, so I concluded to take all of the praise I could get and try once more to get Betty Dean interested in my cause.

It was on the afternoon of the eleventh of July that I had my last talk with Miss Betty; she had seemed willing to keep out of my way all day and give everyone else the chance that I thought she ought to take. She did not seem to think so, though, and when evening came I was obliged to do a little scheming to get near her. I made up my mind that I would have it out with her then and there, and commenced the conversation at once by saying, "Everyone has been say-

ing nice things to me but you; have you no kind word for me?"

"Tom, I do believe you are getting vain; what more can I say than what others have said?"

"I want you to say something different."

"Oh, you do? Well, tell me what I am to say and perhaps I will say it."

"Tell me that you love me, Miss Betty, and all that others have said will be as nothing to that."

"Tom, you know I have forbidden you to speak that way to me."

"Now, Miss Betty, I know you have talked that way, but you must say something so that I may know how I stand, for I cannot go on this way much longer. I will not ask you to marry me now, but if you can just say that you love me, I will have something to wait for and will know just what to do."

"Tom, you are not a bit nice. Why do you try to force me to say that I love you? Clay Sterling is in love too, but he never told the girl that he wanted her to say that she loved him; he says that he first intends to make a name for himself in his chosen profession, and you know Clay is rich now."

"So it is Clay Sterling, is it?" said I, and I walked off.

"Come back here, you ninny," I heard her say, then she broke into the most musical laugh I ever heard.

At first I thought I would go back and have it out with her, and then I thought of Clay Sterling and how under present conditions he had so much better chance than I, and the thought came to me that I could go away and try my luck at getting rich. I felt sure that it would be a long time before Clay would make a name in his profession, and somehow I felt that if I were on an even footing with him, I would stand a good chance with the girl. I don't know what reason I had for thinking this, but I was impressed that way just the same.

I had heard of the wonderful fortunes made at Cape Nome and I decided that Cape Nome should know Tom Clingstone in the very near future. To me, the very next thing after decision is action, so I at once wrote a letter to Mr. Dean, in which I told him that I had decided to go to Cape Nome, that I had money enough to pay my expenses without calling on him for my wages and what he had on deposit for me. I also told him that if anything happened to me so that I should have no further use for the money, it was to go to Miss Betty. I bundled up what few things I wanted to take with me and caught the midnight train out of Coldeck. Soon I was on the regular overland train bound for Seattle, and as I slept at night my dreams were of gold nuggets or of seeing Clay Sterling striving to climb up a mountain

which was lettered "success." Each morning I would be awakened by what I thought was an echo of Betty's laugh, and then I would be ashamed to find that I had likened the rattle of the wheels over the joints in the rails to the sweetest laugh that was ever heard.

On the 16th of July we reached Seattle, and as it was about two o'clock when we arrived, I started at once to find out all I could about the boats that were leaving for Cape Nome. Every man I talked to seemed to think that I needed a big outfit if I was going to that cold country and I felt the disadvantage of having no acquaintance on whom I could depend to tell me what to do. I made up my mind that I would not leave Seattle in a hurry, as I had heard some conflicting stories of what I needed to carry with me, and I wanted to be sure. I discovered that there was a boat to leave soon for Cape Nome, and the day she was to leave I was down at the wharf early in order to learn all that I could from the people.

The boat was not to sail until the afternoon, but there were crowds of people around her all day. I saw what the others had and what I needed when I went, but I ran across some people who did not seem to have much use for Cape Nome or any other part of Alaska, and that set me to guessing. About one o'clock, however, I got into a little knot of men who were listening to a miner who had recently ar-

rived from Cape Nome and was going back on this boat. "Yes," said he, "I came from Cape Nome only last week, and I want to say that it is the richest country that anyone ever saw." I looked him over and he was exactly my idea of a miner; he had a long bushy beard, wore a miner's jacket and top boots with his trousers legs tucked into them.

"Why didn't you stay there?" said someone. And the miner answered, "I am going back on this boat and you bet I would not have shown up here if it had not been that I had to come to buy some machinery."

"Now," I thought to myself, "here is a chance to find out just what I wanted to know," and I watched and caught him when he was alone. I told him that I was intending to go to Cape Nome, but that I wanted to know first if I was on the right track, as I had heard some conflicting stories about the place, and I also wanted to know what sort of an outfit I ought to get and where the best place was to buy it. The miner, whose name was Tom Balcome, said he would be glad to give me all the information necessary; and he did not wait a minute, but commenced at once as follows:

"So you have heard something against Cape Nome, have you? Well, don't you let that bother you; Cape Nome is all right. If you have a little money you can take up a claim and work it yourself and get rich

without a question, and if you haven't any claim and want to work for someone else, you can get from ten to fifteen dollars a day without any trouble. Some of these fellows who went up there with nothing and were too lazy to work have come back here cussing the place, but those fellows would be hard up anywhere. Now, the best thing you can do is to get your outfit at once and go on this boat. I will give you a letter to a friend of mine and he will take you to an outfitter's and help you pick out your stuff. I would like to have you go up on this boat, especially if you want to go to work for someone else for awhile, as I am in need of more help, or will be as soon as this boat arrives there with my machinery."

I followed him on board the boat and to a room on the door of which was marked "Purser." Here he wrote a note which he addressed to George Scott, Pierson Hotel. He gave me the letter, also directions as to how I would find the hotel, and told me I had better hurry. I was so glad to find one honest man who seemed to take an interest in me, that I was doubly anxious to start on the same steamer with him, so I at once started out to hunt up Mr. Scott at the Pierson. It struck me that the location was not the best in the world, and that the appearance of the hotel did not indicate that it was patronized by the "quality," as Dan Hornbeam used to tell about,

but I argued that there were so many people here now, that one could not choose his lodgings. I went in and found the woman who kept the place and asked her where I could find Mr. George Scott.

"Mr. George Scott," said she, "I have no boarder by that name."

"Oh, yes we have," called out a voice from the other room. "He means Scotty, the goat."

"I never thought of him," said the landlady. "He is asleep there on the bench," pointing to one of the benches in the hotel office.

I looked the way she was pointing, and was going out in disgust when it occurred to me that there was something familiar about the figure she was pointing to. I went over to the bench and lifting the hat from off the man's face, found that I was looking into the eyes of Dan Hornbeam. The surprise was mutual; Dan jumped to his feet and catching me by the hand said, "Hello, Tom, old man, how are you? You are just the fellow I want to see; come to my room." He hurried me off without giving me a chance to say a word until we were inside his own room with the door shut.

"I was afraid," said he, "that you would call me 'Dan' and that wouldn't do here. You see when I left Omaha I left in a hurry and didn't have time to take anything with me; not even my own name, but

that is a matter of little consequence, for a fellow can pick up a new name quicker than he can a new suit of clothes."

I handed him my letter from Tom Balcome and told him that I was in a hurry to get my outfit and get back on board the steamer. Dan read the letter and then lay back and laughed until the tears came to his eyes.

"So you fell into the trap, did you? Well, as long as they haven't got your money, we will keep you out of it."

"What do you mean, Dan?" said I.

"I mean that this Cape Nome business is the biggest fake on earth and the only men who are making money out of it are the transportation companies and the fellows who stay here and catch the suckers as they come in. Balcome sends you to me and I take you over to an outfitter's and have you buy a lot of truck that you don't want and could not use in a thousand years; you pay double price for the stuff and after you are gone Balcome and I divide the commission that we get from the outfitters."

"But," said I, "how are you going to divide with him when the boat sails this afternoon and he is going back to his mine?"

"That is all right, my boy, but all the mines he has are the suckers he catches each day, and as for his

going on this boat, he goes on them all. Last week he went on two; the day after to-morrow he will be sailing on another one. The fact is, Tom, Balcome is hired by the company who have steamship tickets and miners' outfits to sell, and you will find him some day next week telling another lot of suckers about his mine in Cape Nome and the chances there are at that place for a young man after he has spent all of his money for a steamer ticket and an outfit," and Dan went off into another fit of laughter. As for myself I had nothing to say. It was hard for me to believe that the honest appearing old miner was only a fake after all.

After awhile I told Dan something of myself and of my desire to get rich for the sake of my employer's daughter. I did not tell him the name, for I thought it too sacred to speak in the presence of a man like Dan Hornbeam. After I was through and Dan had listened attentively, he said:

"Tom, you always were a sort of a shadow chaser and easily gulled. You may know a whole lot about some things, but when it comes to girls you are in the A, B, C Class, while I am through the High School. Now, Tom, if the girl will love you at all, she will love you the more if you haven't a cent, and if she marries you because you have a bigger pile of dough than the other fellow, all she wants of you is the stuff.

Now, I've got a girl right here; her mother runs this hotel, and the sweet little thing would go her whole length for me and she knows I haven't a bean. She even went so far as to ask her mother if she was willing, and the old lady said, yes if I would act as runner for the hotel. Just imagine me spieling at the trains and boats for sleepers for my mother-in-law's hotel, and a two-bit place at that. Well, I guess not. If I am going to hold up a man he has got to shell out more than two bits."

While we were talking who should walk in but Mr. Tom Balcome, the miner. He looked at me, then at Dan in a surprised way, and I asked him how he happened to get left.

"Don't mind him," said Dan, as he seemed to be trying to find something to say, "he is a friend of mine from the East and I put him on to your little game."

I made up my mind that I would not stay with that gang, and as soon as I could, went back to my boarding house, which, if it was not more respectable than the one where Dan was, did not hold any bad characters that I knew of. The next morning Dan called for me bright and early and told me that he wanted to have a good talk with me.

"You see," said Dan, "I think I used you rather mean in the past, for you thought I was honest and I wasn't. I have never done anything very bad, just

cracked a few cribs, that's all, and I want to live square and am willing to do it if I can get a good start. Now, I have a proposition to make. There is nothing here for either of us, there is nothing in Cape Nome for you, so let us go to San Francisco and we can both get work at something, live square and be able to look any man in the face. I will take my own name again and if we can't make it go any other way, we will look up some rich widows and throw ourselves away on them."

"But how about your girl here, Dan?"

"Oh, she doesn't count; when I marry, I am going to marry money. It's just as easy to give a girl 'guff' that's got money as one that's strapped."

Dan seemed so honest that I believed him, and the result of that talk was that the next day found us aboard the steamer Walla Walla, bound for San Francisco. This was my first trip at sea and I went on board with fear and trembling. Going down through the sound it was delightful, but after we had left Victoria, B. C., and had passed Cape Flattery it was decidedly different. They put me away on a shelf in what they called a "state room," and I divided my time between thinking what I had eaten that did not agree with me, and trying to hold myself on the shelf. Dan did not seem to mind it in the least, but I made a solemn vow that if ever I got safe ashore again, I

would walk around the next time I wanted to go anywhere. Three days after leaving Victoria we landed in San Francisco. Our first work was to get a room, which we did in a respectable place at two dollars per week, and then we were ready for work. The next thing was to get the work, but I will be obliged to tell you in my next letter about that.

LETTER NUMBER TWENTY-FOUR.

San Francisco, Cal.

Looking for work is not the most pleasant job in the world, even if you are willing to do anything to make an honest living. Dan says there is nothing so discouraging to a fellow who has gone wrong once, as to be looking for work and to be turned down at every corner, and I guess he is right, for it was discouraging enough for me, and I am sure I have never gone wrong in the sense that Dan meant it.

For years Dan has hated the sight of a policeman; he seemed to think they were his natural enemies, but he has changed his mind a little now, and this is how it happened. We had been looking for work a few days, with no success, when one evening we walked into a restaurant to get our supper and to plan our hunt for the next day. Dan was not feeling any too well, as he had been turned down hard several times by men who might have let him down easy, as he expressed it, when in walked a fine specimen of the San Francisco police force. He had come in for his

supper as we had, and I would not have given him a second thought if it had not have been that I noticed Dan watching him. "What is the matter?" said I. "Is he an old friend of yours?"

"No," said Dan, "I never saw him before, but I would like to swat him one just for luck."

"But if you never saw him before and know nothing about him, why do you feel so towards him?"

"Why? Because he is a policeman, of course. I never see one of those duffers but I feel like swatting him one for luck."

"Now look here, Dan, you must not talk that way. The policeman is the friend of every law abiding citizen, and you are law abiding; therefore, he is a friend of yours. He is the guardian of the law and if you will stop and think you will realize that we must have law and order or no one would feel safe for a minute."

"I suppose you are right, Tom, but I would like to swat him just the same, and I would not mind giving that big nigger standing by the door grinning, a poke in the ribs, too. Just to think that black sucker has a good job and is fat and sleek and you and I can't get a chance to shovel dirt in the street."

"But it isn't anything against him, Dan, that he is well fixed. Most likely by the time we have been in San Francisco as long as he has been, we will be a long way better off than he is. You must not get

discouraged because we haven't struck it rich in a minute."

"That's all right, Tom, but you are putting up for both of us, and I am ashamed to say that you did the same thing once before when I shouldn't have let you."

Just at this time a gentleman who had been sitting at the next table got up from his place and sat down by the side of Dan, and it seemed he had heard the whole of our talk, but we had been so interested that we had not noticed him.

"Excuse me, gentlemen," said he, "my name is Bowen and I could not help but hear your conversation. I thought perhaps I might help you."

Dan and I were all eyes and ears for we thought only of work and I was somewhat disappointed when he continued as follows: "You see the big policeman, whom your friend Dan seems to want to mix up with, is a friend of mine and one of the most accommodating fellows you ever ran afoul of." Then turning to Dan, he said, "If you are still of the same mind I will try to fix it for you."

Dan was somewhat taken aback, but realizing that it would be the part of a coward to back out, he said, "All right, you fix it and if you fix it in five minutes, I will be ready."

At this Mr. Bowen left us and went over to where

the policeman sat eating. The police, after hearing what Mr. Bowen had to say, laughed, nodded his head and finishing his cup of coffee, started with Mr. Bowen for our table.

"Come on, boys," said Mr. Bowen, "it's all fixed," and the four of us left the restaurant together. We soon found ourselves in a vacant room over a saloon with only the proprietor of the saloon as an addition to our party.

The policeman, Mr. Doyle, was a fine looking specimen of an athlete, and when he laid aside his coat and vest, I made up my mind that Dan might have a hard time to swat him.

"Now," said Doyle, turning to Dan, "I understand that you have a natural dislike to all policemen, and you have decided that if you could swat me once you would feel relieved. I told my friend, Mr. Bowen, that I was willing you should do a little swatting, but I proposed to get in a mouthful while you were getting a meal. That's fair, isn't it?"

Dan agreed to the fairness of the suggestion and in a minute they were at it. Dan had no science at all and was only good at rough and tumble fighting. The policeman was a large man and had a small amount of science, and withal was a hard hitter. The result was easy to guess; Dan was no match for the policeman and measured his length on the floor sev-

eral times in a very short time, and the worst of it was, that he did not swat the policeman once. I thought Bowen and the saloon keeper would burst themselves laughing, but the policeman was the worst; he strutted around as though he had gained the champion belt. As we were about to go Doyle said, "I think I ought to have a chance at this other one to pay for my trouble." He pointed to me as he spoke and he couldn't have pleased me better, for while he was having his bout with Dan, I had been taking his measure and I had decided that I could show him a trick or two. I look smaller than Dan, but am in reality about fifteen pounds heavier, he weighing one hundred and eighty pounds while I weigh all of two hundred.

Bowen said, "No, let the kid go, you have won laurels enough." But the saloon keeper chimed in and helped the thing along for another fight. Dan said he thought one was enough to go into retirement at one time.

"Well," said Mr. Bowen, "what do you say, Tom?"

"I say," said I, "that as long as we are here and Mr. Doyle thinks that he hasn't had exercise enough, we had best let the show go on." And at the time I said this I was pulling off my coat and vest.

"Good," echoed both the saloon keeper and Doyle, and we got squared without any formalities. Doyle

came at me with a rush, but he only hit the air, as I side-stepped and handed him one on the ear that sent him quite across the room and laid him out full length on the floor. When Mr. Doyle came at me again, I could see that he was mad and I also understood that if I did not succeed in knocking him out that I would get a terrible beating. He evidently thought my first blow was a chance shot, for he came at me with more of a rush the next time. I stopped his blows until I got an opening and then laid him out again. He regained his feet and we were about to close again when the saloon keeper jumped in and separated us. The idea had just struck him that we were having no rest and as he saw that I was putting up a good fight, he thought we ought to go at it more like fighters. After a few minutes' rest we came together again. This time Doyle came at me with more caution, but his anxiety to finish me up quick got the better of him, and he left me an opening that the blacksmith had taught me to take advantage of. I dropped a little to let his right arm go over my head and at the same time I hit him one under the chin that settled the fight. It was ten minutes before he came to and the first thing he said was, "What fell on me, anyhow?" You ought to have seen Dan; I never saw so much joy depicted on any one man's face as there was on his, but he did not say much,

only after retiring to a private room down stairs, he addressed Doyle, saying, "Say, old sox, that young fellow there is a friend of mine; he is the fellow who carries the swats."

"That is all right," said Doyle, "but there was a time when you thought you had them, wasn't there?"

After the fight we all got better acquainted, and when the saloon keeper found that we were looking for work, he offered me the position of night bartender. I thanked him but declined.

"But," said he, "I thought you were looking for work."

"I am, but I have a little money left yet; enough for Dan and myself for a few weeks, and I am going to try to get something to do that I would not be ashamed to write to my mother about." Everyone looked first at me, then at the saloon keeper, who said:

"Right you are, my boy. Stick to that and you will win out. I wish I had done the same thing."

Our little meeting broke up then, but before we parted Mr. Bowen made us promise that we would meet him the next morning at eight o'clock at the same restaurant we had first met at. When we got back to our own room that night, Dan acted like a kid; he danced about the room and squared off at everything, then he would come over to me and ask

how I did it and where I learned how. I told him of my experience with the blacksmith, and a few other things that interested him in that line. "Well," said Dan, "you are a trump card, sure enough. Just think how you swatted that cop," and then he would lay down on the bed and roll and laugh.

"Dan," said I, after he had carried on about as long as I thought he ought to, "what do you think of Mr. Bowen and what do you suppose he wants us to meet him for in the morning?"

"I don't know, Tom, I can't make that fellow out. He has an eye like a hawk and he has something up his sleeve for one of us, whether it is good or bad. If I had been at anything crooked lately I should be afraid of him, but as it is, I am willing to look him up and see it out."

"Dan, why did you change your name when you left Omaha?"

"It was this way. I got tired of the kind of life I was leading and I made up my mind that when I got out of that scrape I would turn over a new leaf and never do anything again that the law could touch me for, so when I got loose I ran away from the town, not the law, mind you, but from my companions, and I changed my name, thinking it would be easier to live a new life. I found out afterwards though, that the only way to lead a new life was to

do it with my own name and I had decided to change back to the old one as soon as I could leave Seattle. I knew when I saw you that my chance had come to commence life anew and I hitched on and here we are."

The next morning found us eating breakfast at the restaurant where we were to meet Mr. Bowen, and before we were half through he came in and sat down with us. After we were through breakfast he invited us up to his room. This we could not understand, but we were willing to take chances. As for myself, I rather liked Mr. Bowen and felt sure that he meant only good to us, besides that he was a very interesting talker and could talk on any subject. Soon after we arrived at his room, the secret was out. After getting us nicely seated and giving each of us a cigar, he said, "Now, boys, I am nearly twice your age and can call you boys, you need work and you don't care what you do, so it is honest labor, and I need help and have taken a fancy to both of you. In the first place, I want to tell you that I am a detective," and he threw back his coat and showed us his star, "and the work I want you to do is detective work, and detective work takes men with nerve and men who are willing to do exactly as they are told. Now, before we go any further, are you willing to accept the position; what do you say, Dan?"

"It is a pretty good turn over for me, Mr. Bowen, but if Tom says it is all right, it is a go with me."

"Well, Tom, what do you say?" inquired Mr. Bowen. And I, feeling that I needed excitement more than anything else, told him that he could count on me.

"Look here, Mr. Bowen," said Dan, "there is something about this that I don't understand. We are strangers in this town; you never saw us until yesterday; you must know a great many other men whom you could get and who would be glad of the job, and I don't understand why you take up with us. It makes me think of a dime novel I once read, a sort of a boy detective business."

Mr. Bowen laughed and said, "It may look a little that way, Dan, but I think I have sized you up all right and I will tell you something. In the first place when I saw you in the restaurant last night, I spotted you for a crook and after I got interested in your conversation I made up my mind that I would bring you and Doyle together and get better acquainted with you. When you accepted my invitation to meet Doyle, I was satisfied that the police were not looking for you and that you were honest in your intention to live a new life. You are going to be honest, Dan, because you have gotten tired of being dishonest and you find it doesn't pay. Your friend Tom

is honest from principle, and he is too apt to think everybody else is honest, but you are suspicious of everybody and it will take you a long time to outgrow it. You see I believe you are sincere, Dan, and your knowledge of criminal life will be a great thing for you in this line of business. Do you understand now why I offer you a position?"

All the time Mr. Bowen had been talking Dan sat in open mouthed wonder and when he was through and Dan had recovered himself, he said, "Say, Mr. Bowen, with Tom telling me what is right all the time and you reading me like an open book, I have just got to be honest, now that is all there is to it."

Mr. Bowen laughed and said, "It is settled then," and he shook hands with us both, to bind the bargain.

Dan is always thinking up something, and just as we had everything settled, he said, "Hold on there, Mr. Bowen, how about Tom; if I can be of such assistance to you, what can he do?"

"Never you mind him," said Mr. Bowen, "I have just the place for him," and with that we followed him to his office, where I was installed as office man. I don't know what has become of Dan; I have not seen him for a week. The last time I saw him he was enthusiastic over the work and was looking better than I ever saw him before. You may think it strange that I do not know where he is, but it did not

take me long to find out that if Mr. Bowen wanted me to know anything he would tell me. I like what I have seen of the business, and if I could keep the loss of Betty out of my mind I think I would be perfectly happy.

LETTER NUMBER TWENTY-FIVE.

San Francisco, California.

Dan showed up this morning and scared me nearly to death, for he had a black eye and a generally used up appearance. Mr. Bowen came in with him, and when I noticed that he was smiling I thought perhaps things were not so bad as they might be. Mr. Bowen was soon called away and Dan then told me his story, which was quite an eventful one, but perhaps I had best give it in his own words.

"You see," said Dan, "when I disappeared from here I left port under sealed orders as it were, that is to say, one of the points Mr. Bowen impressed upon me was that I should tell no one, not even you, because he said we would not be obliged to do so much guessing if our plans were miscarried. Now that is all over, however, and I can talk. It seems there had been some diamonds snatched from a jeweler up here on Kearney street and the jay who was robbed couldn't tell a thing about the guys that swiped the sparklers. There had been a half dozen different men put onto the job before Mr. Bowen got any show, and I happened to go up there with him

when he went to get his pointers. I had shadowed a few easy ones for him and he praised me up a good bit, but he had no thought of giving me any real work. The jeweler gave us to understand that the only way to trace the thieves was by the diamonds, as he hadn't the least idea what the men looked like. Mr. Bowen asked him who else was in the store at the time and he said no one but a woman he had been waiting upon. Mr. Bowen asked him to describe the woman, but the duffer could not even do that; he could only say she was dressed in black, wore a widow's veil and was of medium height.

After getting as good a description of the stones that had been stolen, as we could, I asked Mr. Bowen to turn the case over to me as I thought I might be able to clear it up. After a little talk he concluded to do this and gave me the written description of the stones. I knew by this that he had not dropped to my scheme and so I let him think I was off for the pawn shops to see what I could find. That night I took in all the shows which, thanks to the star Mr. Bowen furnished me, did not cost me a 'nick' for admittance, and down at the Orpheum, ts last place I went to and about ten o'clock, I struck the lead I was looking for. You see I was not looking for sparklers, but for the girl with the widow's weeds, and I found her. She was with a flash looking cove that I had never seen

before, so all I could do was to wait for the show to spill out and then shadow my game."

"But tell me, Dan," said I, "what made you think of looking for a woman and how did you know this was the one who was in the store?"

"Say, kid, you would never make a detective, if you don't catch on quicker than that. As soon as I heard from the shop keeper that there was a woman in the store at the time, I minded the gang that I used to know in the East. They always took a woman with them and if there was no trouble in getting away, the woman would only be an incident, but if she saw that the boys were going to have trouble in cleaning up, she made herself an accident, that is to say, she would fall or faint so as to block the shop keeper's way and give the boys a chance to get out into the crowd. I knew the girl who worked that racket East, and I knew that both of her pals were doing time in an Eastern pen, and it struck me that this might be the same old girl with a new set of stokers. I was sure if it was this one, that there was no use in looking for the sparklers in any pawn shop in San Francisco, for unloading the stuff too near home was what caught her pals before.

Well, my guess was right about finding her at some theater, for she is daft on shows, as I happened to know. I shadowed her and her steady to Ellis street,

where I saw them go into a pretty nice sort of a hash house, and then I left them. I knew I was on a hot trail and I slept that night at a turkish bath house just to cool off. The next day I dressed myself the best I knew how, and called at the house with the intention of engaging board there. After I had rung the bell I chanced to think that I was a detective and playing the part of a gentleman, and I wondered how I would get along without making any fool breaks. The door opened and the nicest little blonde that I have seen for many days, stood before me. Say, Tom, I thought about you and began to think that I was having some of your luck. I wanted to chuck the little one under the chin and ask her for a kiss, and perhaps I would if she had not called me to time by asking me what I wanted.

'Excuse me, lady,' said I, 'but when you opened the door you flashed so much loveliness on me that I wasn't sure but I had reached the door of heaven by mistake.'

She laughed and said I had better stop my nonsense and tell her what I wanted. She tried to be severe, but I knew I owned her just the same.

'Well,' said I, 'if you must know my business, I called to see if I could get board and room here.'

'I guess you can,' said she, 'but you will be obliged

to see Mrs. Kirkland about that. If you will step into the parlor I will call her.'

I stepped into the parlor, and say, Tom, talk about a home-like place—a place that's a cross between a home on earth and a heaven the good folks tell us about, that parlor was just the thing. You may laugh at me, Tom, but there was something familiar about that parlor. I could not tell what it was, for it was something that I could not describe, and it took me back to my old home town in Massachusetts, and to another parlor that I had not allowed myself to think of for years; a parlor where I last saw the only woman on earth who could have made a man of me. You didn't know I ever had a love story in my life, did you, Tom? You are not the only one in this town who has had palpitation of the heart. While I sat there waiting for Mrs. Kirkland, I went all over my last meeting with my old sweetheart. I remembered how I pleaded and I remembered about her telling what she had heard about my wild tricks, some of which were not so, but most of them, I am sorry to say were. Finally, I said to her:

'Vesta,' her name was Vesta Dawson, 'if you will accept me I will be everything that is good and true, but if you refuse me I will not answer for myself, for I know not what will become of me.' How well I remembered her answer:

'I have consulted my friends, Dan, and have decided to take their advice, which is to refuse your offer.'

Then she began to talk about wanting to be good friends always, and never forget that we had been playmates and friends since childhood. But I turned from her without saying good-bye and left the house. That same night I left the home of my childhood and native city, and never yet have I set foot in it again. I have never written home, and have tried hard to forget both it and her. As I sat there thinking, the tears came into my eyes. It seemed as though I had been there an hour, although it was really not more than half that time. I tried to shake off the spell that was on me, and rising went to the mantel and took up a small frame. I looked at the picture it held and there beheld my own photograph just as I looked eight years before. Just then I heard a rustle of a dress and turning found myself face to face with the subject of my thoughts, Vesta Dawson. The room was rather dark and she did not recognize me, but said:

'You sent for me?'

'No,' said I, 'I sent for Mrs. Kirkland. I would never send for one who sent me away, and Vesta Dawson, did that.'

I think I must have said the wrong thing, for as sure as fate, the little woman threw up her hands and fell over. She would have fallen to the floor, if I

had not caught her. I laid her on the couch and was thinking I would have to raise the house, when who should walk in but the little blonde. She seemed to know just what to do, and as she was not in the least frightened, I guessed she must have been doing a little rubbernecking. The blonde did her work so well that I thought I ought to jolly her a little and said to her:

'You are as useful as you are good looking, and I am glad to know you are a sensible girl withal.'

'Is that so?' said she. 'Well, I am not running away from the fool killer, and he is expected here every minute. What did you say to Mrs. Kirkland, anyway.'

By this time Vesta Dawson, or Mrs. Kirkland, as I knew her to be, began to come to herself, and as she raised herself up on the couch, she said:

'Oh, Dan, you gave me such a shock.'

I started for the door when she said, 'Don't go, Dan, I must talk with you.'

'But,' said I, 'what will your husband say?'

'I have no husband, Dan, and even if I had, I would want to ask you to forgive me, as I have asked the forgiveness of your father and mother years ago.'

I could not withstand that appeal so sat down on the couch beside her, and we talked for four solid hours. It seems that about two years after I left home she

got acquainted with Mr. Kirkland, and taking the advice of her relatives, married him. He claimed that he was rich. He was a widower and much older than Vesta, but they were married and came at once to California, where Mr. Kirkland hired a large boarding house and installed her in it and never did a thing from that day until the day he died, which was about four years ago. After he died Mrs. Kirkland kept on with the boarding house, and made a much better success of it than ever before; in fact, she owns the furniture complete, and has the thing so systematized that she has little to do outside of the overseeing, which seems to be easy for her, but would drive me crazy.

After we had talked for about four hours she asked me how I happened to come to her house, and I told her I was looking for a place to board and room, and had stumbled into her house by accident. She then showed me a room and I offered to pay her in advance, but this she declined. She struck me the hardest when she asked me what business I was in. I had known it would come and I wanted to tell her the truth, but I did not dare to quite so soon. So I told her that I had been to Alaska, and had had bad luck, getting back to San Francisco with but little money, and that I was now looking for work. She swallowed

this story so easy that I thought I must be a past master of the art.

'Dan,' she said, after we had gotten settled down to a full understanding of our conditions, 'I am not sorry that you are not rich, for it will give me a chance to show you that I trust you, and if you do not get work at once you must not worry.'

Say, Tom, is it a wonder that women are gulled? I am glad she refused me that once for I never would have appreciated her as I do now, and if I ever do anything to make her think less of me, may the old Nick take me home, for there is where I would belong."

"Never mind that part of it, Dan, go ahead with the story about the diamonds, you know."

"Well, Tom, that's the part that makes me feel a little sheepish. You see Vesta trusted me to all of her history, and gave me to understand that she would never question a word I said again, but I did not have the confidence in her to tell her what I was up to; not that I did not feel assured that she would be as true as she knew how, but I thought if she knew what I did, it would upset her and she would without meaning to, spoil my plans. The next morning I saw my two birds at breakfast, but I didn't let them see me. I questioned Vesta about her boarders, and in a round about way found out all she knew about Mr. Murdock

and his wife; this was the name my two birds went by. I found also that the room I occupied was next to the one occupied by them and was connected by a door. Mr. Murdock passed himself off as an agent for some Eastern company, but Mrs. Kirkland remarked that he had a great deal of time to himself. I was satisfied that I was on the right lead, but I was puzzled as to where the diamonds were kept. I felt sure, however, that they were hid somewhere for I knew they would not carry them about with them, and I felt pretty sure that they would not pawn them in San Francisco, neither would they send them East to a confederate. My reason for this was that the lady had had bad experience with similar cases at other times. The next time I found the couple out of their room, I went in and examined the whole thing carefully. I got in with a skeleton key and was not much disappointed when I found nothing. I took pains at the same time to fix the bolt on the door that led from their room to mine, so that it would be no bar to my opening it from my side; then I fitted a key to the door and found that I could enter when I chose. I thought I would call upon them that night after they were asleep, but I heard something that day that changed my plans. Mrs. Kirkland told me that Mr. Murdock had been summoned East, and that they were to give up their room Sunday morning.

They had paid their board a full month in advance, but Mrs. Murdock told her to keep the money as they felt they had been so nicely treated, that they should have given her a month's notice anyway.

'But,' said Vesta, 'don't you think it strange that Mrs. Murdock should ask me not to say a word about their going to the other boarders?' She added, 'I was impressed to tell you and I really don't know why unless it was that she asked me not to mention it.'

I thought at times that I ought to report to Mr. Bowen, and then I would say to myself, 'I took this job to make a start for myself, and I guess I will stick it out.' I knew I would not do things according to rule, but I argued, 'what's the "dif" if I do them?' Saturday night or rather Sunday morning about three o'clock I tried my key in the door leading from my room into theirs and carefully opened the door. They were sleeping like two dead ones, but as I had a big thing at stake, I took the precaution to give them both a good dose of chloroform, then I tied their hands and feet and went on a still hunt for sparklers. I don't think I missed any and there was a good bunch of them.

It was five o'clock before I got through with my search and I had them all packed away in a nice little grip, the property of Mr. Murdock. My next move was to get back into my own room, which I did after

giving my patients a little more to quiet them or to hold them quiet. Then I stepped quietly out of the house and, striking a cab, went at once to Mr. Bowen's house. It is an easy thing to get an audience with your chief, especially after you have not shown up for a few days, and I soon followed my name into the house. Just as I was ushered into the reception room Mr. Bowen, dressed in a bath robe, walked in through another door. Say, Tom, perhaps I didn't feel bigger than Captain Kidd about that time.

'Well, Dan,' said Mr. Bowen, 'what's the good news, for I see you have some?'

'If you wanted to have some people arrested, Mr. Bowen, how would you do it?'

'I would step up to the telephone and order it done, Dan. Why?'

'Well,' said I, 'the diamond thieves are at such a number Ellis street, in the second story front room, they are tied and have had a good dose of chloroform, so they won't be hard to catch.'

'All right, Dan, but where are the diamonds?'

'Right in this grip,' said I, 'every one of them,' and as he went to the 'phone I told him it was a man and a woman they would find there. They found Mr. and Mrs. Murdock very nearly dead, but they brought them out and I understand they are not feeling just as good as they should now.

Bowen says I did the job in a very unbusinesslike manner, but I got the sparklers, didn't I? The hardest part was to come, for I realized that I must go back and square myself with Mrs. Kirkland. When I got back, there was the most exciting time I ever saw; all of the boarders were talking at once. I met Mrs. Kirkland and she was so glad to find that I was still alive; she had been hunting everywhere for me. At first I told her that I had waked up early and went out for a walk, and it was not until afternoon and everything had quieted down, that I told her the true story and the part that I had played in it. She was surprised of course, but when she found that I had a situation and was more than willing to board with her for life, she seemed perfectly satisfied. So you see, Tom, while you have had a dozen or more love affairs and none of them have come to a head, I have had only one and the thing is all settled in a week, and with a girl that is all wool and a y——, no, she isn't a yard wide, but she is all right just the same."

"But, Dan, how about that black eye?"

"Oh, that happened this morning. I was walking down the street when who should I see but a chap I once knew East; in fact, he did me a mean trick once, and when I found there was a reward offered for him, I often thought I would like to secure it. I did not know how to have him arrested in order to get

the reward, so I just smashed him one for luck. He was game and fought back, but in a few minutes the cops came and run us both in, then I sent for Mr. Bowen, and told him what I had done."

"What did he say to you, Dan?"

"He said that I had a lot of originality, but he thought if my head held out and no one killed me, I might make a detective yet."

LETTER NUMBER TWENTY-SIX.

San Francisco, California.

I heard someone remark once that San Francisco was a swift place, and as the remark was new to me, I pondered over it quite a little. We speak of a swift horse, or a swift running brook, but what a swift town meant was something more than I could understand. If the man had said St. Louis was a swift town, I could have understood that, because I should have thought he meant it was swift when the cyclone struck it.

I look back now and think I was a little green, for the swiftness of San Francisco is very apparent to a fellow who is on the spot. Swift? I should say it was swift! The boys at fifteen are older than their fathers, and the girls are older at twelve, than the girls back in Hardacre are at thirty. It would most likely make the people smile to hear a man talk of girls at thirty, but that would be nothing in Hardacre. I have known girls there to be cutting teeth at thirty-five. Swift? Well, well, a detective's office is the place to find out about the swift ones. Why, only last week there was a girl standing in front of a store window in Market street, looking at the new

goods displayed there, when a man stepped up and introduced himself. He told her he was very much impressed with her appearance, asked her a few questions, and in fifteen minutes they were on their way to the minister's to be married. Three days afterwards the bridegroom called at our agency to see if we could not help him hunt up his wife. He said she had quit him without saying as much as "By your leave."

One of the swiftest things I have been mixed up in myself was Dan Hornbeam's wedding, which, as Dan would express it, was pulled off week before last. I was best man and wore a dress suit. Just think of that! Me in a dress suit! Dan said I was just dead swell, and I think myself that I cut a pretty good figure. Dan came into the office one morning and said that Mrs. Kirkland had rented his room to someone else, and it was a case of getting married or hunting up a new boarding place. As he liked the boarding house and did not have time to hunt up another, he thought he had better get married at once, especially as the boarding mistress seemed perfectly willing.

This was the way he told it to Mr. Bowen and myself, but after Mr. Bowen had gone out he told a far different story to me. Dan had been quite fortunate as a detective. The man he had the scrap with turned out to be one of the diamond robbers, but the reward

that had been offered for him was for another offense. Dan collected the five-hundred dollars reward, and you would have thought he had discovered a gold mine by the way he swung himself. He got the check one morning about nine o'clock, and the first thing he did was to go to the bank and get it exchanged for twenty-dollar gold pieces. He said that paper which said on the face of it that it was good for five hundred dollars might be all right, and again it might lie to a fellow. The shiners he knew were all right. I went up to lunch with Dan that day, and after we were through and the boarders had all gone, Dan said to Mrs. Kirkland: "I want you to take care of this for me," and with that he commenced tossing twenty-dollar gold pieces into her lap. There were twenty-five of them, and after the last one had landed, Dan said: "Now, don't think you are the whole thing in this ranch. I own part of the stock myself." Then we walked out, leaving Mrs. Kirkland wondering where Dan's good fortune had come from.

I started to tell you about Dan's wedding. It was great. I was introduced to more nice looking girls than I ever saw together in one bunch. Dan and Mrs. Kirkland were married at nine o'clock in the evening, and then we had supper. After the supper the bride and groom held a reception. After the reception we danced until about two o'clock in the

morning. While we were dancing the bride and groom disappeared. We hunted the house over from top to bottom, but they were nowhere to be found. I thanked Betty in my mind a hundred times that night for making me learn to dance, and I did enjoy myself, even if Betty was far away, although when the whole thing was over, I felt the loss of her more than ever. The San Francisco girls are all right, but my heart is occupied just now with the thoughts of a girl who may be the wife of someone else while I am thinking of her. What a fellow doesn't know ought not to bother him, and as long as I don't know for sure that Clay Sterling and Betty are married, I am going to love her memory, and if she is married, I hope I may never find it out.

I expect the right thing to do in writing about a wedding is to describe the costumes, but beyond the fact that both Dan and myself had on dress suits, I hardly think the world will be any wiser about the dress on this occasion. Perhaps I would not have thought so much of my suit, had it not been a little tight for me. The fellows who were in the habit of hiring this suit could not have been in my class,—but, to go back to the wedding party, about two o'clock the guests commenced to leave, and in a half hour there was no one left but myself, so I took myself off also.

I don't know much about astronomy, neither do I know which is my guiding star, but I have often thought I must have been born in the new of the moon, for there seems to be something new happening every turn I take. I had not gone more than four blocks, when I heard cries of "Police! Murder! Robbers!" and looking down a side street, from whence the sounds proceeded, I saw two men pounding and kicking another one. It did not take me a second to tell what to do, and only a minute to do it. I jumped in among them and struck out right and left, but they were no spring chickens, either, as I soon found out. If it had not been that the man whom they were pounding got on his feet and used his cane on one of them, I might not have come off so well, but fortune and the old man favored me, and we soon had them on the run. When I got my companion out into the light of a street lamp, I found that he was an old man and that he had been very roughly handled; in fact, so much so that when he found he was safe, he became unconscious. I called a policeman and he rang for the ambulance, and we took the old man to a hospital. The attendants soon had him back to consciousness, which happened to be a lucky thing for me, for the policeman had just told me that he guessed I was the cause of the old man's trouble and that he was going to lock me up. When the old

man came to himself, however, he overheard some of the policeman's talk to me, and the look of contempt he gave the policeman was worthy of the study of an artist. He reached out his hand, and slowly and deliberately said: "That young man saved my life," and then he added: "I want him to stay with me until morning." Morning was very near at hand and I stayed. The old man took me by the hand and went to sleep, and for two hours he hardly moved. At the end of that time he woke up quite refreshed. He then looked over his clothes and found that the robbers had secured what little money he had with him. I let the old man have two dollars, and after he had taken my name and address, I left him.

I am learning something every day, and sometimes I pick up a little information at night. For instance, the night of which I am talking taught me that a tight-fitting dress suit is not the best thing in the world to fight in. After I got ready to leave the hospital I found that my coat was split from the claw hammer tails to the collar, and that the trousers, most likely not wishing to be odd in the matter, had followed the lead of the coat, and—well, to say the least, I was a sorry looking sight. Even the old man smiled when he got a good view of my dilapidated condition. It took quite a little of my spare money to fix up with the tailor from whom I hired the suit, so Dan's wed-

ding was not altogether a good thing for me financially. The old man I saved from the hold-up men, Mr. Chace, must have been more scared than hurt, for he was around to see me a couple of days after I saw him at the hospital. He paid me the two dollars I loaned him and wanted to buy me a new suit of clothes. This I would not let him do, as I explained to him that they were a suit hired for the occasion, and that it had only cost me fifteen dollars to square myself with the tailor. I had to tell him all about the wedding and Dan and almost everything else I knew. Then he walked out, and although I liked the old man, I was glad to get rid of him, as I had some work to do. About an hour afterwards he came back again, and handed me two gold pieces, a ten and a five, and walked out before I could ask him what it meant. Of course, I knew what it was for; at the same time I was rather taken aback about the whole thing.

Dan's wedding trip was short, and he was soon back on duty. I have to look twice at him now to realize it is the same old Dan that I knew in the old days, he is so bright and interesting. Both he and his wife insisted that I should go to board at their house, and so I was installed there in a very nice room.

One morning Mr. Bowen called me into his private office, and, asking me to be seated, commenced by saying: "Tom, do you like this business?"

"No, Mr. Bowen, I must say that I am not very much in love with it, but I never would have told you if you had not asked me, and I try to do the best I can."

"I know you do, and I think I know why you don't like it, but I want you to tell me."

"I think it is because it shows me the wrong side of life. I feel at times that all women are bad and all men are vile. If I stop to think, I know this is not so, but it is the side of life I see, and it weighs so heavily on me that I cannot shake it off."

"You are right, Tom. You are easily impressed by your surroundings. Your heart is in the right place, but it runs away with your head. I saw a man giving you a hard-luck story yesterday, and saw you give him a quarter, and you thought you had given an honest unfortunate the price of a meal. I followed the man to a cheap joint near by and saw him lose that quarter shooting craps. That man is a common hobo, and he couldn't have gotten a nickel out of Dan with a jimmy. You are so anxious to find people who are honest, that you believe them if they tell you so without looking for proof."

"I guess you are right, Mr. Bowen. I am no good."

"Oh, yes, you are, Tom, but you forget that we are working among the criminal class and the unfortunate, and you forget the fact that the class we have

the most to do with is a very small portion of the people; and then when anyone gives you a fill for the sake of bleeding you, you are so anxious to know of some good that you catch at the straw and get the worst of it. From the standpoint of this office no one but a fool would get married, for we see more of the trials of married life than of anything else, and yet the greater part of the people who are married are better off than they would be single and are much happier."

"I am glad to hear you say so, Mr. Bowen."

"Why, Tom, are you thinking of getting married?"

"No, but I expect that the girl whom I wanted to marry may be by this time the wife of another, and I should feel better if I knew she was quite happy."

"But how about yourself?"

"Oh, I shall never marry. I set my heart on one girl, but the other fellow had money and a profession, and feeling that the girl was inclined towards him, I got out and gave him a clear field."

"I cannot understand why you gave up so easily."

"Well, perhaps I have not told it just as it was. You see I felt that my chances would be better if I had money, and I started out to get rich. I was going to Alaska to the gold fields, but that bubble burst, and I don't see anything ahead for me, and particularly so if you are going to let me out."

"I may let you out, Tom, but if I do, it will be for

your own good. No man can make a success of a business that he does not like, and you do not like detective work. I did not think of letting you out until I had found you something better, and the better thing has come after you."

"You talk in riddles, Mr. Bowen. What do you mean?"

"There is a gentleman who comes here to see you every few days who has taken a great liking to you; in fact, he says you saved his life, and he wants to do something for you."

"You mean Mr. Chace, of course, as he is the only man who comes to see me, but I do not see what he can do for me; neither do I consider that he owes me anything. I guess I did save his life as the thing turned out, but I would have done it for anyone else just as soon."

"Yes, but the fact remains that you did do it for him, and the fact also remains that Mr. Chace is a very rich man, and you had best do exactly as he wants you to."

"Mr. Chace rich! Why, he did not give me to understand that he had money."

"That was a little game of his own thinking up. He found out first that you liked him for himself, and now he is willing to let you know that he is a very rich man and can help you. So, Tom, I guess I will

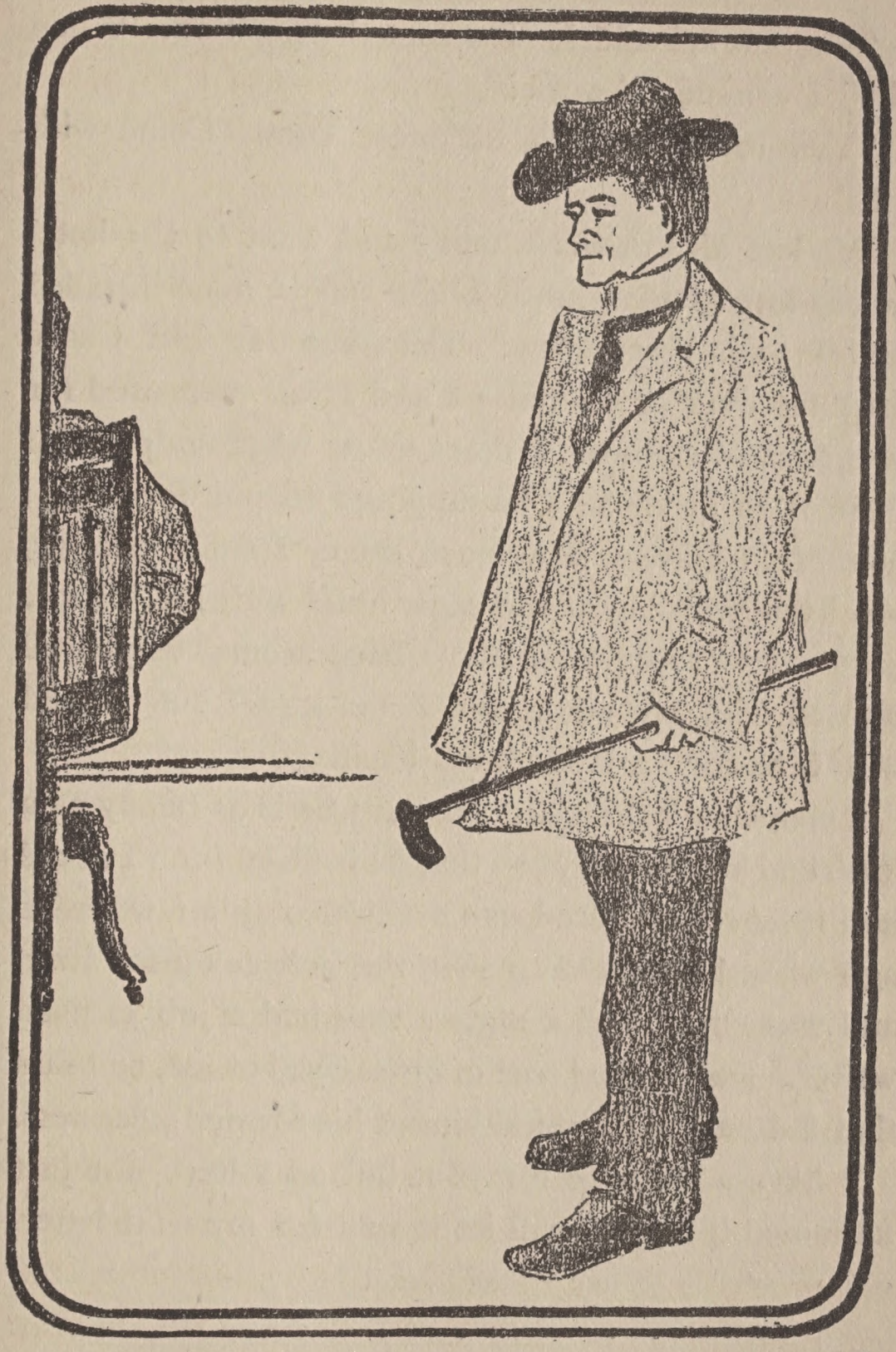
be obliged to discharge you for the fear you will decline to work for Mr. Chace on account of your position with me."

Before I could get over my surprise at the turn affairs had taken, Mr. Chace walked into the office, and I noticed that he was not as old a man as I thought, and that he had an air of refinement about him that I had given no particular attention to before.

Mr. Bowen spoke first, saying: "There is your man, Mr. Chace. I have just discharged him for incompetency." There was a twinkle in his eye as he said it, and Mr. Chace said: "So you are coming to work for me, are you, Tom?"

"I will work for you, Mr. Chace, if I can do the work required of me, and if I can earn the salary you are willing to pay me, and only on those conditions, for although Mr. Bowen has discharged me, I will never be considered an object of charity. I am young and strong, and with my little acquaintance in this city, I am sure I can secure work at something that I can do, and where I can earn the money I receive."

"Well spoken, Tom," said Mr. Chace, "but this case is not as one-sided as you may think, for I need a young man badly, and I will see that you do not get a cent more than you earn, and I also assure you that you can do the work."



"Mr. Chace walked into the office."

"Very well," said I, "I accept the position. When shall I commence work?"

"You can commence at once, Tom. Come with me."

We left Mr. Bowen's office and went to the hotel where Mr. Chace boards, and I was at once installed as his private secretary. The next day Mr. Chace took me over to his tailor's and I was measured for two suits of clothes. I don't know what the price of them is to be or who is supposed to pay for them; neither do I know how much salary I am to receive, but I am boarding at the same hotel with Mr. Chace, have a fine room, and Mr. Chace seems very well pleased with my work, and I am sure I am pleased with him, for he is kindness itself.

I met Dan last night. He says he is as happy as a lord, and has the only job that he is fitted for. I asked him if he remembered one evening only a few weeks ago when he wanted to swat the policeman for luck, and was envious of a nigger who had a job as head waiter. Dan looked sort of cross-eyed at me, and said that I should not remind him of his former meanness.

I have a surprise for you, but as I have not just fathomed it myself, will let it wait for my next letter.

LETTER NUMBER TWENTY-SEVEN.

San Francisco, California.

After I had finished my last letter I had occasion to add a little to it, telling you I had a surprise for you for my next letter. I don't think I realized what I wrote at the time or the importance, to me, of the discovery I had made; neither do I understand how I managed to get the letter mailed. I have acquired a habit of looking over the hotel register every day, and if anyone had ever asked me why I did it, I could not have told them. I expect it is because I am so far away from home, and long at times to see a familiar face or read a name I have been acquainted with back in my native state. Whatever my ideas were on the subject, I was at last rewarded by reading a name that looked and sounded familiar, but it gave me something of a "jar," as Dan would say. There it was, though, as plain as plain could be: "Clay Sterling and wife, Chicago." Of course, there could be but one Clay Sterling, and if there had been a dozen, this was the Clay Sterling whom I knew, for I recognized his handwriting; and of course there could be but one wife for Clay Sterling, and that could be no other than Betty Dean. I pointed to the name and asked

the clerk where they were, and was told that they were in their room. It was too late to think of calling on them, even if I had the courage, which I did not; so I wrote the little postscript to my last letter, and then wondered what I would do. It was a cool night and already past eleven o'clock, but I felt that I must go somewhere and get more air than I could get in the hotel, so I started out for a walk. By the time I got out to the sidewalk I was walking like a mad man, and as luck would have it, ran square into Mr. Chace, who was returning from a visit to his club.

"Why, Tom," said he, "what is the matter with you? You look as though you had seen a ghost."

"Worse than that, Mr. Chace; I have seen all of my hopes blasted, and I think the best thing I can do is to go down to the dock and jump in."

Mr. Chace took me by the arm and led me back to the hotel and up to my room. Then he made me sit down and tell him the whole story.

"Well," said he, after I had finished, "the case looks pretty bad, but it seems to me that you have yourself to blame for it partly, although I would not take it to heart so much if she would so soon marry another."

"But, Mr. Chace," said I, "you do not know Betty Dean. She has the sweetest disposition and the most winning ways that woman ever had. I know there is nothing about me to love, and I do not blame her, not

in the least, for Clay Sterling is a fine fellow, is rich, and is building up a name for himself in his profession. No, I will never blame her, but it is tough on 'yours truly' just the same."

"Now, Tom, don't decry yourself; there are hundreds of girls who are fully Miss Dean's equals who would jump at the chance to marry you. You must not forget the old saying, 'There are as good fish in the sea as ever yet were caught.' All you have to do is to fish a little and you can take your pick. You see, Tom, I know what I am talking about. I know lots of good qualities that you have, and I have studied you as no girl seems to have done, for if they had, they would love you as I do."

"You love me, Mr. Chace. I don't understand you."

"That is because you don't understand yourself, Tom. In the first place you saved my life. When you thought I was a poor man, and not knowing whether you would ever see me again, you loaned me all the money you could spare. Dan and Mr. Bowen have told me all they knew about you, and as far as they know, there is not a black mark against you, nor a dishonest hair in your head. Don't worry about a girl who did not appreciate your true worth. Just go right ahead and prove to her that she was mistaken in you, and I will help you do it."

"Thank you, Mr. Chace, I will do the best I can, but do you think I am childish in thinking so much of a woman?"

"No, Tom, by no means; I like you all the better for it. It shows that your heart is in the right place, and I feel that when you get over this little episode you will be a better man for the trials you have weathered. After that you will find some girl who is worthy of you; then you will get married, and we will go to keeping house together."

I looked at Mr. Chace to see if he meant what he said, and I knew he was in earnest, for he looked so anxious,—as though he wished he could smooth things out for me. I made up my mind then and there that I would be governed by him as far as possible, and told him so.

"All right, Tom; you say you will be governed by me. What you must do is this: Go to bed and try to sleep. To-morrow when you get up fix yourself up the best you know how and go down where you can watch the dining-room door, and intercept them when they go in; congratulate them both; ask them how long they are going to be in the city, and if they are going to stay long enough, tell them you would be pleased to take them out to drive. If they accept, you can go to the stable where I get my horses and get the best team you can. Have a driver or do the

driving yourself. If they should so far forget themselves as to ask about your business, you can tell them that you are not doing much of anything just at present, but enjoy yourself."

I promised to follow the directions as nearly as possible, and at once retired, but not to sleep. I lay there and tried to remember every word Betty ever said to me, and I am sure I recalled the most of them. Just before time to get up I dropped off to sleep, and when Mr. Chace came in and spoke to me, I was ashamed to have him ask me if I had not overslept. I dressed as quickly as possible, for I realized that I was late. I found out by the clerk that Mr. and Mrs. Sterling had just gone into the dining-room to breakfast.

"Now," thought I, "here is the time to show what a brave man you are, Tom," and looking about the dining-room until my eye rested on Clay and his wife, I called the head waiter and asked him to seat me at the same table. I had it done as though it were by chance, and did not look at them until I was seated. I did not have the courage to look at Betty, but I was sitting exactly opposite Clay, and I raised my eyes slowly to his. He spoke before I had a good look at him.

"For all the world, if here isn't Tom Clingstone!" and the next instant my hand was grasped by Clay

with a grasp which proved to me that he was glad to see me.

"Tom, old boy, how are you? But" (to his wife), "excuse me, sweetheart. Let me introduce you to the man whom I have so often talked to you about. Mr. Tom Clingstone, my wife."

I was dazed. Why was he introducing me to her? Was it sarcasm?

"I am glad to know you," said a strange sweet voice, and then the truth dawned on me. It was not Betty after all. What could it all mean? For a moment I felt mad with Clay because he had dared to think someone else was sweeter or nicer than Betty Dean. I shall never know how I got through the next half hour. With the best generalship I could muster, I asked when he had seen the Deans, and found out that he had seen them shortly before he was married. Miss Betty was invited to the wedding, but did not attend, sending her regrets at the last moment. Clay said that Betty was wedded to her literary work, and that she was devoting the most of her time to it.

I found that Mr. and Mrs. Sterling were to leave at once for Los Angeles, and after informing them that the hotel we were in was my home and most likely would be for some time, I excused myself and left the dining-room. In the rotunda of the hotel I

found Mr. Chace waiting for me. He was looking anxious, but brightened up when he saw me. He took me by the hand and said: "You seem to have lived through it all right, Tom."

"Lived through it!" said I "Why, the chump never married Betty after all."

With this Mr. Chace burst out laughing, and laughed until the tears ran down his cheeks.

"And so you did not get a chance to make a martyr of yourself after all, Tom; and I really think you are mad because he slighted your Betty."

Well, perhaps I was a little hurt that Clay slighted her, but you bet I was better satisfied the way it was after I had time to cool off and realize how the conditions were. For the next few evenings Mr. Chace and I talked over the best way to straighten out the snarl, but we could come to no decision, and at the end of the fifth day I received a letter from Betty Dean, which read as follows:

"My dear Tom: We just received a telegram from Clay Sterling, giving us your address, and mama insisted that I write you at once, for she is sure that you must have written to us and that the letter has been lost in the mails. You know, Tom, that we owe you an everlasting debt of gratitude which we never can forget. Papa speaks of you often, and wonders why you left so suddenly and the way you did, and I

have seen tears come into mama's eyes as she has talked of you and wondered if your clothes did not need looking after or if you were sick and needed anything. I never see Auntie McLoud that she does not ask if we have heard from you, and the last time I saw her she said she guessed you did not realize what good friends you had here in Coldeck. I know she will write to you as soon as I tell her where you are. Papa says so many nice things about you, particularly about your bookkeeping and the care you took of the yard. He has hired a man in your place, but papa says he does not take the interest in the business that you did. You must write to us and tell us what you are doing. Tell us all about yourself and how you like San Francisco and why you did not go to Nome. I stepped into papa's office one day last week, and that blacksmith friend of yours was asking papa about you. He seemed very much interested to know if we had heard from you and if you were coming back here again. I don't suppose Coldeck would look like much of a place to you now that you have lived in San Francisco, but papa says you must not forget that you have friends here who would like to see you.

"I have read this letter over to mama, and she says that I have told you nothing of myself and that you would want to hear something of me. I think she is

mistaken, for if you had cared to have heard from me you would certainly have let us know where you were. As mama says I must write something of myself, I will do so; and as we usually write or talk of what is uppermost in our minds at the time, I will tell you of my new dress just home from Madame Devet's, of Omaha. I wish you could see it, Tom. It is a dream, and fits me perfectly, except that the left arm-syce is a little tight, and that can be easily fixed. The material is Roseda green Venetian cloth and panne velvet. Of course, you will want to know how it is made. It has the cutest little bolero jacket of the panne. Don't you like bolero's? They are so fashionable this winter. The waist to wear under the jacket is finely tucked mousseline de soie, and is slightly bloused over one of the new belts, which really should be called girdles. The bolero has a narrow finish of Renaissance lace, and the crush collar of panne has a jabot of the same lace. The skirt hangs perfectly. It is made with five gores, with three long plaits on each side, finished with pipings of the panne. The peau de soie drop skirt is a light shade of Roseda.

"I think this will do for this time, Tom, but if you will write to papa, I am quite sure he will answer your letter, and no doubt can write you something more interesting than I can, although I am sure you will be interested in my dress. Mr. Gregory called this

afternoon when I had it on, and he said it was jus stunning. Very truly your friend and well-wisher Betty Dean."

When I first opened this letter and found it was a long one, signed by Betty, I was half crazed with delight, but after I had waded through the whole thing I was ready to go to the asylum, and there was no delight in it. I think I must have sat for an hour without moving a muscle, and might have sat there until this time had not Mr. Chace come into my room to see what I was doing. In answer to his question of what ailed me, I handed him the letter. He read it over carefully twice, and then said: "That is a stunning dress she has, Tom."

"Yes, that is what Gregory says."

"Who is Gregory?"

"Hanged if I know. I never heard of him before. What do you suppose he is calling there in the afternoon for?"

"I am sure I don't know, my boy. Is Gregory the only thing you saw in the letter?"

"Well, that stood out most prominently."

"That is a fine description of a dress. Reads like the description of a bride's trousseau."

"Oh, don't, Mr. Chace. The description of that dress drives me crazy, and especially what Gregory says about it."

"Do you think you would know that dress if you should see it, Tom?"

"Well, I should say not. My only idea of it is that it cuts her a little under one arm, and is made of some kind of Venetian stuff, and the only Venetian stuff that I know anything about is something they make inside blinds of, and it is usually painted green. The bolero jacket I suppose is some sort of a Spanish fandangle, but I cannot just understand it, for bolero in Spanish means 'dancing girl.' The rest of it is as clear as mud, and I give it up."

"Tom, did you ever hear of reading a letter between the lines?"

"Why, didn't I read it all?"

"No, I don't think you read half there was in that letter."

I took the letter and read it over again very carefully. Then I looked between the lines and at every blank space on the paper to see if some other words would not appear, but I could see nothing. I handed the letter back to Mr. Chace and asked him to read what he saw between the lines, as I realized that he thought he saw a hidden meaning to the letter. Mr. Chace looked the letter over again, and then said:

"Well, Tom, I am not so sure about the writing between the lines. At first I thought the girl loved you and was trying to cover it up, but that may not be

the case, and I would dislike very much to raise your hopes only to have them dashed again at some future time. You are broken up enough now. You were much more of a man before you met Clay Sterling. Your meeting with him has stirred up an old love story that perhaps might as well have been forgotten."

"Don't you believe in love, Mr. Chace?"

"Of course I do, Tom. It is a disease that all men and almost all women catch some time in their lives after they have gotten well over their children diseases. Some are cured by getting married; others get worse, in fact never get over it as long as the object of their affection lives; and there have been cases known where love outlived the death of the object and was at last buried with the individual."

"That is the kind I have, Mr. Chace."

"That is what everyone thinks when they have a bad case, but I have seen lots of them, who thought so, have a dozen attacks of the disease in as many months, with a different object every time."

"How about yourself, Mr. Chace?"

"Oh, as for me, I am an immune. I had the disease twice bad, and now at the age of sixty I can safely say I am beyond danger. But it is different with you, Tom. You are so constituted that you are sure to have it bad, and the sooner you get married

and settled down, the better it will be for all concerned."

"Then do you think I should write to Betty and propose to her again?"

"Propose to her, you goose! No; write and tell her how your last trousers were made, and tell her that Miss Marthy Crocker thinks the coat you are wearing now is out of sight."

"Who is Marthy Crocker?"

"She is a cousin to Mr. Gregory. Tom, does a house have to fall on you before you wake up? You go and answer that letter now, and give her as good as she sent."

With this Mr. Chace left me, and I started in to answer Miss Betty's letter. I wrote all of a dozen letters and tore them all up. In the first I wrote I started off by telling her how much I loved her and that I could not live without her. Then I wrote another, explaining why I left Coldeck as I did, telling her it was all on her account and that I had intended to come back for her as soon as I had money enough. I wrote another, in which I said nothing about her, and only spoke of the different people in the town whom I knew would be interested in hearing of me. I wrote another asking a lot of questions about the little McLoud girl whom I saved from drowning. I wrote another giving a good description of San Fran-

cisco and the Golden Gate. I wrote several others and tore them all up before I finally wrote one which suited me. Here is a copy of the one I sent:

"My dear Miss Betty: Who in the deuce is Gregory? Your friend and well-wisher, Tom Clingstone."

LETTER NUMBER TWENTY-EIGHT.

San Francisco, California.

The next morning after writing the letter to Betty which I told you about in my last communication, the first thing Mr. Chace asked me was what I had written. I did not want to tell him at first, but he finally wormed it out of me, and after I told him he laughed a little and said he guessed I had a pretty bad case.

I have often heard that truth is stranger than fiction, but I never realized it so much until I had some peculiar truths drop at my door. One evening as I was walking down Sutter street, I ran across a hard looking specimen of a man who had gotten into trouble with some young men. He had run against them by accident and they were inclined to make trouble for him. I saw the whole affair and went to the man's assistance. The young fellows then turned on me, but they reckoned too much on their own ability and not enough on my training. It was just fun for me to lay those young scamps out right and left, and the funny part of it was that a couple of policemen stood and saw the whole thing without

making a move. After I had the hoodlums lying all around the sidewalk, the policemen came up and the young scamps scattered in double quick time. Then I found why the police had not interfered before: One of them was my old friend Doyle, and when he saw who it was he said he knew that I must be in the right and he wanted to see the fun, he feeling sure I was fully able to take care of myself.

I took the man who caused the trouble to be an old tramp, but I did not think so much of helping him out of a scrape as I did of having a little fun myself. When the tramp heard the policeman call me by name, he came up and looked in my face, and said: "This isn't my nephew, Tom Clingstone, of Hardacre Corners, is it?" The policemen laughed, and Doyle said that perhaps I had found a long lost brother. Said I:

"I don't know anything about being your nephew, but I am Tom Clingstone, of Hardacre Corners, and my father and mother live there yet."

"Yes, yes," said the old man, "I know. I am your father's older brother. Thomas, when I left Hardacre eighteen years ago you were only a little tot about three or four years old. You were named after me. I have been a wanderer on the face of the earth ever since, and no doubt should still keep wandering if I were able, but I am sick, Tom. I have been in

Alaska the past four years, and the climate got the best of me. Sometimes I think I will pull through all right, and then again I feel that I haven't long to live."

"That's all right, Uncle Tom. But why stand here in the cold? Why don't you go to your home? I will go with you and see that you don't get into any more trouble."

"But, Tom, suppose I tell you that I have no home or no place to sleep but the police station?"

"Oh, well, if that is the case, come with me. A Clingstone and an uncle of mine cannot sleep in the police station if I can help it." And I put him in a cab and took him at once to Dan Hornbeam's house, where I hired a room with a bath for him and gave Mrs. Hornbeam directions to make him as comfortable as possible. I wanted to call a doctor to see him, but he said he did not need one; and that no doctor could help him. He said he had consumption and could not live long, but he preferred to take his time to die and did not care to be helped off by a doctor.

I used to go up to see the old man every day. He seemed to enjoy having me come, and as he had been pretty well over the world, he was a very interesting talker. He seemed to be getting along quite well and I was thinking that he would soon be all right again, but it seems the old man knew his condition better

than I did. One morning about three o'clock Dan came for me. The old man had been taken with a bad spell and wanted to see me at once. When I got there the doctor was with him and he was a little easier. As I came into the room his face brightened, and taking my hand in his, he said: "You are a good boy, Tom. I am glad I found you in time. I will soon be gone, but you will not lose anything by your kindness to your homeless old tramp uncle." I tried to brace him up and tell him that he was worth a whole regiment of dead men yet, but it was of no use, and just as the day commenced to break, he passed away.

We had the funeral the next day, and after it was over I thought how glad I was that I had been able to make his last few days a little pleasant. I went back to the house with Dan and his wife, and Mrs. Hornbeam handed me a bundle of papers which she said my uncle had given her to be handed to me after the funeral. I opened them with a great deal of curiosity. The first I came to was a letter from my uncle addressed to me, which read as follows:

"My dear nephew: When you read these few lines I shall have passed from your sight, but I trust I may never pass altogether out of your mind. When I met you first in this town, I was intending to go East and hunt up your father. Possibly I would not have thought of going had I not felt that the hand of Death

was on me, but although I have been a wanderer for years and have only seen the rough side of the world, I felt that I wanted to die among friends. Meeting you and having you do as you did by me, and knowing you did it without the thought of ever receiving a cent for your kindness, was a satisfaction to me that I cannot find words to express. I have two things to give you, my dear nephew: The first is a piece of advice, which is: Don't get so bound up in money getting that you will run a chance of dying without friends; and my other gift is the little steamer trunk and its contents that you will find under the bed on which I die. I leave it to you, knowing that a young man with as good a heart as you have proved you have cannot misuse anything. You will find my will in this same bunch of papers that Mrs. Hornbeam is to hand you, which only amounts to the legalizing of this letter. Good-by, my dear nephew. May your life be as bright and happy as you deserve. Your affectionate uncle, Thomas Clingstone."

In this same bundle of papers was the will spoken of, some other personal papers and the key to the trunk. Dan said my uncle went out and got the trunk the day after I brought him to the house, and that he had meant to have spoken to me about it, but had forgotten to do so. The greatest surprise was yet to come, for when we opened the trunk we found it to

contain over two-hundred-and-fifty-thousand dollars in cash and certified checks. Mr. Chace counted it and said it was hardly necessary that my uncle should have made a will, especially as he had taken pains to indorse the checks all over to me. They all congratulated me on my good fortune, but I guess I did not realize what I had fallen into at first, for I was only wondering if I could not have done more for the man who had done so much for me. Mr. Chace and I took the trunk to the hotel and put the money in a safe place, and that evening we sat down in his room to talk the events of the day over.

"Well, Tom," said Mr. Chace, "I suppose you will want to resign from my employ now that you have a fortune of your own."

"Perhaps not, Mr. Chace. I may decline to accept a salary from you now that I have enough of my own, but you have seemed more to me like a friend than an employer, and I feel that I need you as much as you can possibly need me."

"Well spoken, my boy. I am glad to hear you talk that way. We can work together and be of assistance to each other. But tell me, what have you in mind to do?"

"My strong desire just at present is to write to Betty Dean and tell her that I am rich and ask her if she will listen to me now."

"Tom, you do need me more now than ever to hold you in check, and you shall write no such letter to Miss Betty if I can prevent it. She must not know anything of this, but after we get matters fixed up here so we can leave, we will both go East and see what can be done."

"And will you go with me, Mr. Chace?"

"Of course I will, Tom, if you will be governed by what I say; for you have made me feel young again, and I am as much interested in your love affair as you are."

The next day after I had this talk with Mr. Chace I received another letter from Betty. It came in the morning—a nice fat letter, and as soon as I got it into my hands I rushed upstairs to my own room to read it where I would be entirely alone. I never saw a plumper letter, and a letter was never opened by a more anxious man. I cut off the end of the envelope with the scissors and drew out the precious bunch of paper that Betty had placed there with her own hand. It was folded queerly for a letter, and the thought occurred to me that the dear girl had sent me her picture. I took off one wrapping after another until I came to a handsome sheet of perfumed note paper, on which was written:

"My Dear Tom: He is our new minister, and he is just too lovely for anything. Your friend and well-wisher,

Betty Dean."

It was as much as ten minutes before I got it through my thick head what it all meant, and then I realized that it was simply an answer to my letter of eight days before. She had lost no time in answering it, and as she had written the same kind of a letter to me that I had to her, I certainly had no fault to find; at the same time the letter did not make me feel very good. I took it in to Mr. Chace's room and handed it to him. He readit over, laughed, and said "Tom, that girl is well worth having. I don't blame you for being in love with her."

"And still do you insist that I must not write and tell her that I am well able to take care of her?"

"Of course I do, Tom. If I read that girl right, you could never catch her with money for a bait. Now, promise me that you will not send any more letters to her without letting me see them. You may be able to take care of your money, and I think you are, but you certainly need a guardian when it comes to your affairs of the heart. Do you promise?'

I promised to do as he said in the matter, and he seemed quite relieved.

There were several other letters for me in the mail that same morning, and after reading them I handed them all over to Mr. Chace. He said he learned more about me by those letters than I had ever told him, and he seemed very much pleased by what he found

out. There was a letter from Mr. Dean in which he reminded me that he had three hundred dollars that belonged to me, and which he was ready to send to me any time I should send for it. He also wrote that when I got tired of wandering around the country I could have my position back at his office. Mrs. Dean had written a short note, in which she said she missed me very much, and that I must not forget I had a home to come to if I ever wanted it. There was a letter from Mrs. McLoud, in which she thanked me again for rescuing her child from a watery grave, and one from my mother asking me if I did not think I had sowed enough wild oats to come home now and go to work with my father as I ought to.

After Mr. Chace had read them all over, he said: "Your own folks seem to appreciate you the least of anyone."

"Perhaps they know me better."

"No, that is not so, Tom, for I feel that I know you better than they do, and I have only known you a few weeks. Yours is not an isolated case. There are many parents who do not understand their own children, and they often stand in the way of the development of them. It is possible that these cases are the exceptions, but we often find them. Many a boy is turned into the ministry because his mother decided that there should be one preacher in the fam-

ily, and the only result is the spoiling of the making of a good cow puncher. These letters from people who were willing to take you as they found you and give you credit for what you have done are worth much in the eyes of the world, and will far overbalance anything that can be said about you by people who do not know you, or knowing you, will not understand you. There is no letter here from your father, Tom. Why is it he does not write to you?"

"Because my father understands me better than my mother does, and I have only lately found that out. I used to think he was hard toward me because he did not understand me, but in his early days he was a sailor and he learned by experience that it takes the knocks which only the outside world can give to put sense into the average boy."

"Perhaps you are right, my boy, in your estimate of him. At all events, your knocking about seems to have done you good."

We have decided to go East as soon as we can get ready, and I am anxious to go, for I realize that although I may not be able to catch my heart's desire with a money bait, I shall care but little for the money if I cannot induce her to share it with me.

We spent one evening at the home of Mr. and Mrs. Hornbeam this week, and I never saw such a change in anyone as there has been in Dan; and no one can

ever make me believe again that a man who has been wild and even laid himself liable to the law cannot be reclaimed, and I am glad for Dan's peace of mind that he decided to quit his evil ways before he again found his sweetheart. Dan pretended to be surprised that I should come to see him after I had come into so much money, but I have learned that money is worth only what it can buy, and that sometimes a kind act will purchase more real pleasure than can be bought with a fortune in gold and silver. Dan has made quite a success as a detective, and Mr. Bowen is very proud of him. Dan wants his wife to give up keeping boarders. He says it makes him feel cheap to have his wife work, but Mrs. Hornbeam takes a long look into the future and says that as long as Dan is in such risky business she shall continue as she is, and will only retire from her work when Dan can do the same.

On Market street the other day I was surprised to meet James Henry Burdette. He is the first person whom I have seen from my native town since I left there about sixteen months ago. James did not know me at first, but as soon as he found out who I was he seemed very glad to see me. He told me a whole lot about the people at Hardacre Corners; said Mother always stopped him on the street to talk to him of me, and could never talk long without crying.

"But your father," continued James Henry, "doesn't have a word to say. I was in to see him several times on business, and as he never spoke of you, I thought I would draw him out, so I asked him where you were and what you were doing. I never knew the old deacon to be so short with his answers, and I made up my mind that he had lost faith in you."

I listened to James Henry with much interest, but I did not have the same idea of the case that he did. I found that James Henry had come out to San Francisco expecting to get a fine position, but had been disappointed. He also told me that he could get control of the Hardacre paper if he were back there now—a thing he had only just found out, but that he was broke, and was expecting to get a minor position here soon. I knew James Henry was honest and had for a long time supported his mother and sister, and I made up my mind that I would help him and use him at the same time; so I said to him: "Why don't you borrow the money to get home with and go at once and get hold of the paper instead of looking for a place here?"

"Well, Tom, I am surprised at your asking me a question of that kind, after kicking around the world as much as you have. It is true I own the little place where we live in Hardacre, but no one would loan me money on that here. I simply chased a

shadow out here and got left, and must take the consequences of it."

"Don't be so sure you cannot borrow the money, James. If you will do me a favor, I will get you the money."

"Tell me what it is, and if I can do it, I will."

"I will loan you one-hundred-and-fifty-dollars on your personal note, which will be fifty dollars more than you will need, if you will go to my father as soon as you get there and hand him fifty dollars of it and tell him that I loaned you one-hundred-and-fifty dollars, but that you did not want to pay interest on it any longer than you could help, and ask him to give you a receipt for the fifty. You can tell him that I said you could pay it to him and stop the interest, as I was expecting to come East in a short time. The other hundred you can pay me when you can do it without cramping yourself. Is it a go?"

James Henry looked at me in astonishment for a moment, and then said: "I think I see through your game, Tom, and it's a pretty good one to surprise the deacon with, and you will be doing a great thing for me. I will take the money and carry out your instructions to the letter."

I invited him up to the hotel to lunch with me, and I could see his look of surprise at the way I was received and treated by the hotel people. After

lunch we went to the bank and I got the money for him, and I had a little more enjoyment seeing James Henry's eye roll as he saw me get the money on my own check. I went with him when he went to get his ticket and saw him on board of the ferry that was to take him to Oakland; and as we parted, I said: "Tell all the people in Hardacre Corners that when Tom Clingstone lands in that town he will land on both feet," and as I went back to my hotel I laughed as I thought of the send-off James Henry would give me to the people of Hardacre Corners.

LETTER NUMBER TWENTY-NINE.

Hardacre Corners, Illinois.

After an uneventful trip from San Francisco, Mr. Chace and I landed in Coldeck on a cool November evening about two weeks ago, and since then events have been tumbling over themselves, each event seeming to outdo the others. Mr. Chace enters into every new feature of my affairs with as much zest as though the whole affair were all his own. He says this is the first vacation he has had for years, and that he is enjoying it to the fullest extent.

When we arrived here we took the Commercial House 'bus to the hotel, and I enjoyed it more than any ride I had ever had in San Francisco, for I felt as though I had seen adversity in this section of the country, and had surmounted all difficulties and conquered all of my foes. After all, I appreciated the fact that I had not succeeded in smoothing out all of my paths, for the one which led to matrimony was for me still far from smooth. I had youth, wealth, and good, honest, true friends, but the girl I loved with all my heart was yet to be induced to believe in me, and Mr. Chace, who had constituted himself

my manager, had decided that under no circumstances must I tell her of my good fortune. The night we arrived in Coldeck Mr. Chace laid out what he called my plan of attack, which I was to follow as far as practicable; and this I did, and will record the results as I come to them.

The morning after we arrived at Coldeck, as soon as we had breakfasted, I started out to seek my fate. Everyone whom I met seemed glad to see me, and I felt that, at least, here was one place where I was welcome, even though the people did not suspect that I was worth a cent more than when I left them. As soon as I could I got to the yard of my former employer, Mr. Dean, and found that gentleman looking over some accounts with his bookkeeper—a thing he was never obliged to do when I kept his books. As I stepped in at the door Mr. Dean looked up, and seeing me, dropped the books and came to meet me.

"Why, Tom, my dear boy, how are you? I am so glad to see you. When did you get in? Have you been up to the house?"

I laughed at his numerous questions, and he stopped long enough for me to answer: "I am all right, Mr. Dean. I got in last night, and have not been to the house yet."

"Sit down, Tom, and tell me all about yourself.

But no, Mrs. Dean would never forgive me if I did not take you up to the house at once; so let us go right up, and then we can talk on the way. What have you been doing, Tom? Let me see, it is less than three months since you left us, so I don't suppose you have done a great deal of mining. You wrote you were going to Nome," and Mr. Dean laughed as though he thought the mention of Nome was a good joke. "Tell me why you backed out of the Nome trip."

"It was this way, Mr. Dean: I met an old acquaintance in Seattle who advised me not to go to Nome, and so I gave it up, and instead went with him to San Francisco. I have not been idle since I went away, and am not sorry that I did not go to Alaska."

After a little more talk, in which I really said but little, we reached Mr. Dean's house. We walked into the dining-room at once, and found Mrs. Dean. She screamed when she saw me, caught me in her arms and kissed me. Her screaming brought Miss Betty to see what the matter was, and she seemed very much surprised to see me. We talked until dinner time, Mr. Dean forgetting to go back to his yard until it was too late to go before the regular dinner. Anyone would have thought I had been gone nearly three years instead of only about three months by the

reception I received. After dinner Mr. Dean said he would be obliged to go back at once to the yard, and then he asked me if I did not want the money he had of mine. He also took occasion to say that if I was ready to come back to work I could have my old place again.

After Mr. Dean had gone to his yard and Mrs. Dean was busy with the hired girl in the kitchen, I had a little chance to talk with Miss Betty, and you can rest assured that I lost no time.

"I think a good deal of your father and mother, Miss Betty, but I am not in the least sorry to be alone with you. Do you know why I left here?"

"Why, certainly, Tom. You went away to get rich, and although you did not go to Nome, I trust you got rich just the same."

"Now, don't laugh at me, Miss Betty. I have come back here on purpose to see you, and I went away because I thought there was no chance for me. I got it into my head that Clay Sterling was the favored one, and I knew I would have no chance against him, especially as it seemed to me that you had decided in his favor. When I saw Clay in San Francisco and found that you were not his bride, I was crazy to come to you and try again to win you."

"Now that Clay is out of the way, do you imagine that the coast is entirely clear?"

"Please, Miss Betty, do not trifle with me. Who is Gregory?" This last question was an afterthought, as I had been so intent on my mission that I had entirely forgotten the existence of anyone by the name of Gregory.

"Mr. Gregory is a very nice man. I think I told you in my letter that he was perfectly lovely."

"Yes, I believe you did, but don't keep me in suspense. Is he going to marry you?"

"Well, to tell you the truth, Tom, I don't know."

"You don't know! By that I suppose you mean that he has asked you and you have not decided yet."

"You have certainly guessed it pretty near, Tom."

"How long have you known him?"

"About the same length of time that you have had the privilege of asking me impertinent questions."

"Excuse me, Miss Betty, I did not mean to be impertinent, but I am so anxious about my own chances."

"And do you imagine that your own chances would be good if I declined to let him marry me?"

"That would be for you to say, but as long as you are not married I shall keep on trying."

"Then as near as I can see, I will be obliged to marry before your mind will be set at rest."

"Yes, and if you wish to set my mind entirely at rest, you will marry me."

"Oh, Tom, how kind you are to yourself! Now, Tom, you think a good deal of me, don't you?"

"You know I do."

"And you want me to marry the man of my choice when I do marry, don't you?"

"Yes, if you marry the one I think you ought to."

"How kind and self-sacrificing you are, Tom, but don't you remember my telling you once that I did not intend to marry?"

"Yes, but I was sure you would get over that. You are too nice a girl to be an old maid."

"Thanks, Tom; that is a compliment. Let me show you Mr. Gregory's picture," and with that she went to the mantel and brought me a cabinet photograph of a very handsome man. "What do you think, Tom? Isn't he nice looking?"

"Yes, he has a handsome face, and a very good face, but I wish he had a call to some other field of labor."

"It is not like you to be selfish,—but, must you go?"

"Yes, I think I might as well. I guess the last prop has gone from under me."

"Well, if you must, but you must promise me that you will come and see me again before you leave town. Now promise."

"All right, I promise; for I could not refuse you anything." And with that I left her.

It was nearly three o'clock when I arrived at the hotel, and as I entered the office I found Mr. Chace in animated conversation with no other than Mr. Gregory. I tried to avoid them, but it was of no use. Mr. Chace called me over and introduced me; and I was obliged to grasp the hand of the man who had asked to marry Miss Betty. Mr. Gregory was an interesting talker, and as I sat there and listened to him I felt that I could have no chance where he was in the race. I was anxious to have him go, as I wanted to talk with Mr. Chace myself. When he did get up to go he shook hands with us both and asked how long we were to be in town. Mr. Chace told him that we proposed to stay a few days, and at that he said: "I should be most happy to have you both call at the parsonage, and," turning to Mr. Chace, "we could then finish this little talk we have started, and I assure you my wife would be glad to hear your views on the subject, as she has expressed herself very much on the same lines."

With this he left us, and I must say I was in a very unsettled frame of mind.

"What is the matter, Tom?" said Mr. Chace, as I stood watching the retreating form of Mr. Gregory as he went down the steps of the hotel.

"I really don't know, Mr. Chace, but what did you understand him to say about his wife?"

"Oh, I see how the wind blows now. That's the Mr. Gregory of the letter, is it? Well, there does not seem to be any need of trouble in that direction, but are you sure that is the man?"

"Yes, I am quite sure, unless he has a twin brother, for Miss Betty showed me his picture. The thing I cannot understand, however, is what she told me about his asking to marry her."

"It might seem strange, Tom, but did you ever think that perhaps he wanted to marry her just for the marriage fee? He is a minister, you know. The girl knows you are deeply in love with her, and knows also that she can go to any length with you, and her love of fun has led her to make it quite interesting for you."

"It is all very plain to me now, Mr. Chace, as far as Mr. Gregory's wanting to marry her is concerned, and it may be only natural that Miss Betty should want to have a little fun with me, a sort of cat and mouse affair, as it were, but after all it only proves one thing, and that is that she cannot love me and make me as miserable as she is doing now."

"It may be she is only testing you, Tom. Some girls have a peculiar idea of how much a fellow ought to stand to prove his love."

The next day I went down to Mr. Dean's office, thinking I would find out how I stood there.

Mr. Dean was glad to see me, and we talked of various things before I got up sufficient courage to come to the point. At last I said to him: "Mr. Dean, I want to talk seriously to you about Miss Betty. The truth is I want to marry her, and I am ready to prove to you that I can take care of her."

"You surprise me, Tom; not that you love Betty and want to marry her, but that you should want it decided now. You are both young, and Betty knows that I do not want her to leave home for a long time yet. For a time I thought we were to keep her with us indefinitely, but that bubble burst. You see, Betty tried writing, and was quite carried away with it. She had some of her articles accepted, but of late everything has been returned, and she is quite discouraged. You do not need to prove to me that you are able to take care of my daughter, for I know you are, and I am perfectly willing for you to marry her if you can get her to agree to it. And I will say this, Tom: Nothing would please me better than to have you marry her and come back to your old place with me. When I was married I did not have as good a situation as I am willing to offer you, and I know you well enough to know that if she did marry you, you would do your best to make her happy."

I thanked Mr. Dean for his good opinion of me, and feeling that he could make my path smoother, I said:

"Then you are ready to assist me with her?"

"Of course, Tom; but what can I do?"

"You can tell her what you have told me. I am sure it would have the desired effect."

"Poor Tom; what you do not know about women would fill a big book. Why, my dear boy, that is the very thing which would ruin the whole affair. Now, I will tell you something which may interest you. I know she thinks a good deal of you, and although I cannot tell you why I think so, I believe she is more in love with you than she ever was with anyone else. But as for my helping you, Tom, I could not do a thing. All I have to say is, go ahead and win, for I am satisfied that you will never settle down again with me until you have settled this question."

I walked back to the hotel, and I smiled as I thought how sure Mr. Dean seemed to be that I was soon coming back to work for him. I told Mr. Chace of my talk with Mr. Dean, and he made me repeat a good part of it, and after I had finished he sat without speaking for an hour. When he did get ready to tell his thoughts, he said: "Tom, you can never win that girl until she gets ready to be won, and in my opinion, the best thing you can do is to let her alone for a while; but as I have never seen her, suppose you take me up there this evening."

"I can do better than that, for when I was there

yesterday Mrs. Dean invited me to come up to supper to-night and bring my friend, and as it will soon be time, we had better get ready. I came near forgetting it."

That afternoon about six o'clock found Mr. Chace and myself at the home of Mr. Dean. Supper was not quite ready and Mr. Dean had not arrived, so we had time for a nice visit with Mrs. Dean and Betty. Mr. Chace was very much taken with both of them, and owned after we got back to the hotel that the girl was worth trying for. While at the Dean's we talked of everything in a general way, and although we stayed through the evening, I did not have a chance to see Betty alone. The subject of our stay at Coldeck was touched upon, and I remarked that I had seen all of my old friends and was now ready to go back to Illinois and see my father and mother, as I had not seen them for almost a year and a half.

"To-morrow," said I, "we are to leave Coldeck, possibly never to return." I looked at Betty when I said this, and she said:

"What! so soon, Tom? I thought you were going to make us a long visit." If she were disturbed at my announcement, she did not show it. When I shook hands with her at parting, I said: "I will come back if you want me, Miss Betty," but she only answered:

"I do not hire the men at the lumber yard, Tom. You will have to talk to Papa about that," and with this we left them.

As we walked to the hotel that night I asked Mr. Chace what he thought of my chances. The only answer he gave me was that he thought Mr. Dean would hire me or Mrs. Dean would adopt me, but as for the girl he was puzzled, and although she was worth trying for, he was not able after seeing her to advise me.

We left Coldeck the next day and in due time arrived at Hardacre Corners. How strangely familiar the old place looked! We arrived there in the afternoon, and had our things taken to the hotel; then I went down to Dad's office. I haven't thought of him as "Dad" for some time, but as I come back here there seems to be no other name that fits him so well. As I walked into the office Dad was having some words with one of the Walker boys. The first I heard was Joe Walker saying: "If you weren't so old, I would thump you once just for luck."

"Thump me, Joe," said I, "if you are fond of thumping."

He tried to accept my invitation, but his thump did not land; mine did, however, and in less time than it takes to tell it, Mr. Joe Walker was doubled up under the desk. He crawled out and stopping just long

enough to own that he had barked up the wrong tree, he left us.

"Well, Dad," said I, "you seem to be short a hand around here."

"It's a wonder you had not found that out a long time ago."

"Did Henry Burdette pay you some money for me?"

"Yes; he paid me seventy-five dollars. Is that what you came after?"

"No; I don't need the money just now, but I was going through this section of the country, and thought I would just drop off and see Ma for a few minutes."

"All right. Don't overstay your leave."

With this for a parting shot from my Dad, I went up to the house to see Ma. Of course she was glad to see me and had lots of questions to ask me about my journey and the "far west," as she called it. Ma tried to make me say that I would come home and work with Dad again, but I did not make any promises. It almost broke her heart when I told her I could not stay at home that night and that I must go back to my friend at the hotel. She wanted me to bring my friend to the house, but I knew too much for that. I was bound that I would not give Dad a chance to say that I was sponging on him. I would

not even stay to supper, but got away just before Dad came in.

That night I wrote a long letter to Betty, in which I told some truths, and some things that perhaps would not be considered exactly true, but "All's fair in love and war," you know.

LETTER NUMBER THIRTY.

Coldeck, Nebraska.

The next morning after writing you my last letter from Hardacre, as Mr. Chace and I were eating our breakfast about eight o'clock, who should walk in but Deacon Clingstone, my dear old Dad. He found we were in the dining-room, and came right in where we were. When he saw Mr. Chace he hesitated a moment, but he braced up again and came to our table.

"Look here, Tom," said he, "what do you mean by acting this way? Do you want the people of this town to think that I can't afford to keep you and your friend over night?"

"Deacon Clingstone," I said, "I don't care a hang what people think. I am of age and have money enough to pay my way without sponging on my relatives, and I propose to do it. I know you are my father, and possibly are supposed to take some interest in me, but do you?"

The old man smiled, came up and patted me on the back, and said: "You are a chip of the old block,

Tom. I knew it was in you and would come out some day if you got a few good jolts." He walked out of the dining-room and the hotel without saying another word.

Mr. Chace said: "Tom, if you knew how to handle Miss Betty as well as you do your father, what a snap you would have."

In my last letter I told you about writing to Miss Betty, but did not tell you what I wrote. The fact is, I had become desperate, as you will see by the letter, a copy of which I send you:

"My Dear Miss Betty:—I have some news to tell you which I am sure will please you very much. When we left Coldeck we went direct to Omaha, where we stopped a couple of days. Mr. Chace has friends there, and among them we found some Christian Science people. I was very much interested in their manner of treating disease. In fact, according to them, there is no disease other than that of the mind, there being no such thing as matter; therefore, there can be no disease of the material body. It is an interesting belief, and one that seems to be very plain to anyone who understands it, but rather complicated to a fellow who for so many years has carried the idea that if another chap hit him in the nose it hurt. We went to one of their meetings, but there must have been a good many rank out-

siders there, for when they had silent prayer there was so much coughing and sneezing that it lost its solemnity. After the meeting was over and Mr. Chace and I had returned to our hotel, we had a good talk on the subject, and I have decided that we have made discovery. After he had been talking a while, Mr. Chace said: 'The whole thing is wonderful, Tom, as you say, but tell me what particular point makes the most impression on you?' 'I have been thinking, Mr. Chace, that perhaps I can find in this religion a way out of my own difficulty. I am very much in love with Miss Betty. You say love is a disease, and if there is any disease that is of the mind, this certainly is one of them. Now, what I propose to do is to take treatment for this disease,' 'But how do you propose to go to work at it?' said Mr. Chace. 'There was a young woman in the church,' said I, 'who was pointed out to us as a healer. Do you remember? She was quite young, tall, slim, and a decided brunette. She had a very sweet face, and I am sure it would be easy to describe my case to her.' 'A good idea,' said Mr. Chace, 'and I should say she would be the very one. She has large, beautiful eyes—hazel, I think they are, and if I am not mistaken she knows how to use them, too.'

"The next day I called on the healer and stated my case. At first she seemed to think I was making

fun of her, but after a time I convinced her that I was in dead earnest. She agreed with Mr. Chace that love was a disease of the imagination, and she thought she could cure me. At all events, she claimed that she could change the form of my disease, so that instead of loving someone who would not give me a hearing, my love could be changed from the present object of my affection to someone who would be more susceptible to my advances. 'Why,' said she, 'you are not at all a bad looking fellow; you say you have no very bad habits, and if you had money, I am not so sure but that I could love you myself.' 'That's just it,' said I, 'all you girls want is money, and if I were sure this question of money was what stood between Miss Betty and myself, my disease would be cured already.' Then I told the healer about a young lady up in Hardacre whom I had known all my life. 'She is homely as a mud fence,' said I, 'but if you can change a fellow's affection from one girl to another and make the fellow satisfied, you just change my love for Miss Betty to Miss Mary Calkins, and I will be married in less than a week.' With this she commenced treatment. She sat down and took my hands in hers—she had nice, soft hands, and said: 'Now, Mr. Clingstone, in being foolish enough to love Miss Betty, as you call her, you have worked yourself up to an uncomfortable state of mind, and it is all your

own fault; there is no need of it. The disease you call love is simply a disease of the mind. You have imagined that Miss Betty has a handsome face—mere imagination, for, as there is nothing material, there can be no handsome faces. You think Miss Calkins has a very plain face, when in fact there is no face there; you just imagine it. You think you can have more influence over the mind of Miss Calkins than you can over the mind of Miss Betty; therefore, all you have to do is to shut Miss Betty out of your mind. Go at once to the house of Miss Calkins, and kneeling before her, say: 'Miss Calkins, you are the most beautiful woman I have ever seen. I feel that my happiness will never be complete unless you accept me for a husband.' If she is as homely as you say she is, she will believe every word you say. You may be obliged to have several more treatments after you are married, but if you come to me I will give you a special rate.'

"I know you will be pleased, Miss Betty, to know that I have taken this treatment, and that hereafter if we should happen to meet we could converse without your feeling that I was liable to say something unpleasant to you. Your friend and well-wisher, Tom Clingstone."

The next day after Dad called on us at the hotel, Mr. Chace left for New York. He wanted me to go with

him, but something seemed to tell me to stay in Hardacre, which I did. Soon after this a letter came from Miss Betty, in which she wrote:

"My Dear Tom:—Your letter at hand, and I have read it with much interest. I have heard something of Christian Science before, but I never heard of its being used in the manner you mention, and yet it must be in a measure true. However, I think you have things mixed a little. Sometimes we meet people who appear very plain to us at first, but as we become better acquainted with them and find their good qualities and what charming companions they are, their faces seem to brighten until we can no longer bring ourselves to believe that they are plain. So my advice to you is not to put too much faith in Christian Science, but rather depend on yourself. If Miss Calkins has a sweet disposition, is educated, refined and a charming conversationalist, her plain face will never bother you; but, if she has none of these qualities it will take more than Christian Science to disabuse your mind that that same face which is opposite you twenty-one times a week at the table was not run in a very nice mould. You have often said, Tom, that you would do anything for me, and I want to ask you to do two things for me. I feel that you will not refuse me. I want you to come here and work for father. He has asked me to write to you and ask

you to come. If you are already married you can just as well live here. If you are not married, don't fool with Christian Science. Use a little common sense and I will help you. There is a young lady here who often asks for you and who I know would be glad to have you return here. She is known as the belle of the village, and I am sure you could have her for the asking. You are too nice a man to throw yourself away on anyone, for the best can be had for the asking. You know who I mean; it is Miss Darling, and from what I know of her, she is all that a man could ask. Besides that, you who always like excitement, could have a little fun, for Joe Saunders is in love with Miss Darling, and has been for the past ten years, if it were possible to love at so tender an age, and you would have the satisfaction of cutting the other fellow out. I shall expect you as soon as you can get here after receiving this, as father is anxious to have you back, and I will assure you that if you come without a wife I will see that you are provided with one as soon as it can be done and have all things in good form. Your friend and well-wisher, Betty Dean."

After reading Miss Betty's letter I pondered over it for a long time, and at the end of the ponder I was as much in the dark as ever. I decided to go at once to Coldeck, which I did, but not until I had told Dad

that Mr. Dean had sent for me to come back and take charge of his business. Dad did not say much, but I could see that he was pleased. I had wired Mr. Dean that I was coming, and he met me at the train. He insisted that I should go with him to his house, which I did, but I told him that I thought my chances with Miss Betty would be better if I went somewhere else. Mrs. Dean received me cordially, and Miss Betty was kind. I did not get a chance to say much to Miss Betty, however, that day, but when the time did come she asked me where my wife was. She was so cool about it that I thought I would not be caught napping, so I said: "I received your letter just before I got ready to propose to Miss Calkins, and I decided to take your advice and come to Coldeck to marry Miss Darling."

I watched her closely when I said this, and if she were surprised she did not show it, but said: "I am glad you came, for father needs you, and I am sure you will be better pleased with a nice looking wife like Miss Darling than you would with a freak such as you wrote about."

The next night after this talk there was a little company up at the house. It was gotten up for my benefit, and Miss Darling was invited. We had music, both vocal and instrumental, and enjoyed ourselves generally. When it came time for the guests to go

Miss Betty managed it so that I would have to offer to go home with Miss Darling. We had a pleasant walk, and I found her a pleasant companion. I also found that she could talk better when she got onto the subject of Joe Saunders. At last I said: "Why don't you marry Joe Saunders, Miss Darling?"

"For two reasons," said my companion; "first, I have known him so long that he seems like a brother to me; and the second reason is, he never asked me."

"Suppose he did ask you, what would you say?"

"What a question for you to ask, Mr. Clingstone! How could I tell what I would do if he should ask me?"

"What would you say if I should ask you?"

"I should say 'No,' for I know that you are in love with Miss Betty, and I would ruin your life and break her heart if I should accept you, for if I am any judge, she is in love with you."

"Do you mean that, Miss Darling?"

"Of course I do. I have only been real well acquainted with her since you have been away these last few months, but I think I know what I am talking about."

"Say, Miss Darling, would you mind if I should kiss you once?"

"You kiss me! Have you gone crazy? What do you mean?"

"I have to do something to keep from bursting, and I don't know of anything better than to kiss the one who gives me such good news."

"Better wait until you find it is true, and if it is, you may kiss me, but it must be when she is with us."

We had quite a long walk before us, and I told her all about my troubles and asked her advice. "Well, Tom, "said she,—"I feel that I can call you Tom, we are such good friends,—I will give you just one piece of advice: No girl of spirit cares to feel that she is easily won, and that kind of a girl never likes to find that the man she loves can be easily turned down."

"Thank you, Mattie, you are a brick; and if I can ever lengthen your life line I will go a long way out of my beat to do it."

I left her at her father's door and started back. I walked slowly, for I knew that the Deans would all be in bed when I got back. I had a feeling all at once that someone was watching me, and the next moment I ran into Joe Saunders.

"Hello, Joe," said I, "aren't you out late?"

"Not any later than you are, you big brute." This sentence made me wake up to the situation. Here was the man who loved Mattie Darling, and my sympathies went out to him at once. Then he added: "I know I am not as good a man as you are physically. If I were I would lick you to a finish."

"Why didn't you shoot me, Joe?"

"Because I am no coward, and it is only a coward who takes the advantage of a man in a fight."

"Right you are, Joe, you are no coward; for a coward who knows that I could lick him in two minutes would not face me as you have done and say what you have to me; but, Joe, I am your friend, and I can prove it to you."

"Oh, of course, I suppose you can claim to be my friend now that you have won the girl. You would make a friend of anyone as you feel to-night."

"You are right there, Joe, but you are wrong in the main. You think there is only one girl in Coldeck, and I think the same, but it is not the same girl."

"What do you mean, Tom?"

"I mean just what I say. You have gone daffy on Mattie Darling, and my sweetheart lives on the other side of the town."

"Hold on there, Tom. Don't play any tricks on me," and he grabbed me by the arm as he said this, and tried in the darkness to search my face to see if I meant what I said.

"If this is true, Tom, why did you walk so leisurely with Miss Darling, and why was your conversation so earnest that you did not observe that you were being followed?"

"Well, to tell you the truth, Joe, I was telling her

my story and asking her advice. And say, Joe, it has just occurred to me that I might give you a little advice, too. Will you accept it from a friend who would like to do you a favor?"

"Yes, Tom, I will; for I can see that you are honest with me."

"All right then, here it is: No girl of spirit cares to feel that she is easily won, and that kind of a girl never likes to find that the man she loves can be easily turned down. Say, Joe, did you ever ask Miss Darling to marry you?"

"Well, not exactly; but then, she knows how I feel about it."

"Don't take too much for granted, Joe. If you don't ask her within the next twenty-four hours and make her consent, someone ought to take her away from you." With this I bid him good-night, and we parted.

I had decided that the next day I should settle matters between Miss Betty and myself, but man proposes, and woman isn't always there to hear it. The fact is, I did not see Miss Betty the next day. I did see Joe Saunders, though, the next evening, and he was the happiest man I ever saw.

"Tom," said he, "I want to ask your forgiveness for thinking that you were even inclined to cut me out. You are the best friend I have outside of Mat-

tie, and she thinks you are just all right. She told me to tell you that there were times when one could strengthen a life line if they did not have a chance to lengthen it. I don't know what she meant, but she said you would know; and she also said that whatever small secret you two had between you, there was no occasion for me to trouble myself about."

He was so bound up in his own case that he did not think of mine, and I was just as well pleased, for I had nothing to tell.

The next day was Sunday, and I felt that my time had come. I went to church with the family in the morning and started to go again in the afternoon, but when I found Miss Betty was not going, I returned to the house. She seemed very much surprised when I returned, which gave me a little set-back at first, but I recovered after a while, and have since wondered if her surprise was not a little bit of good acting.

"Oh, Tom, is that you?" and she threw up both her hands, "I thought you had gone to church."

"I changed my mind when I found you were to stay at home," said I, "for I wanted to talk with you."

"So do I, Tom. I am dying to know how you came out with Mattie Darling."

"Oh, I came out all right, and Mattie is somebody else's darling now. That is one thing I came back to tell you."

I watched her and thought I detected an anxious look on her face, but I was not just sure.

"Yes, Mattie is to be married soon, and of course you will be invited to the wedding."

"Shall I take this for an invitation?" By the way she said this I was sure she knew I was playing with her, but to carry the thing a little further, I said:

"Hardly; you see the ladies do the inviting."

This time I was sure I could detect a little nervousness, and thinking I had gone far enough, I said:

"Don't you think we had better stop this foolishness? You ought to know that Miss Mattie Darling is to marry Joe Saunders, and I will give you another piece of news: I am going to marry you." I took her in my arms and kissed her. She neither resisted nor returned my embrace, but when she was allowed to, she said:

"As long as you have taken the whole thing into your hands, perhaps you will tell me when my wedding is to come off?"

"You can set your own time, provided it is not too far distant."

"Then we will have the wedding, provided Father is willing, as soon as you can build a little home and furnish it."

"Then you really love me?"

"Yes, Tom, you dear old clumsy, and have since the day you saved my life."

"Then it is all settled, and according to your terms we should have been married a month ago."

"What do you mean, Tom?"

"It was all of a month ago that I gained your father's consent, and I am not the poor man you think, but am worth a quarter of a million in cool cash."

I expected to hear her laugh with joy, but instead, and for the second time in my life, I saw her in tears. Well, girls are funny, anyway, aren't they?

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